An Anchor in the Storm: Annual Report 2019-2020



Orange County Partnership for Young Children

> a partner in the smart start network



Message from the Executive Director and Interim Board President

In a year of unprecedented change, the Orange County Partnership for Young Children has remained steadfast in our support of Orange County's young children and families. As a funder, convener, organizer, trainer, and advocate for young children's healthy growth and development, the services we provide and support are more critical than ever.

The COVID-19 pandemic has turned our world upside down, disproportionally affecting people of color, low-income families, families with young children, and children with developmental delays and mental health challenges. The everyday stresses of parenting young children have been magnified by the effects of the pandemic: job losses, financial insecurity, hunger, the risk of losing one's home, and reduced child care options for parents. Heartbreakingly, children are at increased risk of neglect and abuse.

In this new reality, our programs are supporting families and children in new and different ways while continuing to provide services they depend on – parenting support, early literacy opportunities, healthy learning environments for children in child care, and so much more.

Meanwhile, child care providers face ever-changing health and safety guidance, reduced enrollment and income, and decreased staffing – all while they continue to serve Orange County families. OCPYC has taken on a leadership role in supporting Orange County's child care centers by hosting weekly director calls in partnership with the Child Care Services Association. Amid the ever-changing COVID-19 landscape, these calls provide critical information-sharing and problem-solving with local agency leads and trusted experts.

OCPYC provides ongoing training to child care center directors on developing health and safety policies that maintain quality and the safest environment possible while operating during the pandemic. And, OCPYC has served as the county's point-of-contact for child care centers that need items such as cleaning supplies and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). We know that these small businesses represent the backbone of our economy: without child care, many parents cannot return to work.

Today, more than ever, we need your help. No one could have anticipated what 2020 brought to our community. It has challenged us to our core, but also shown us the meaning of resiliency. It's encouraged us all to redefine our priorities, and to support one another.

As the storm of COVID-19 rages around us, the Orange County Partnership for Young Children is an anchor providing stability and continuity to our community. With your support, we will be able to do more. Read more about our impact in the enclosed pages and then please, consider making a donation to support our work today.

Robin Pulver Executive Director

Lucinda Munger, Director, Orange County Public Library; Interim President, Orange County Partnership for Young Children Board of Directors

The Orange County Partnership for Young Children (OCPYC) is dedicated to ensuring that every child in Orange County arrives at school healthy and ready to succeed. We promote young children's healthy development and school readiness by planning, implementing, and funding a variety of programs that address the critical issues facing young children and their families. Our work falls into four focus areas: **Early Care and Education, Child Health and Early Intervention, Family Support, and Community Outreach and Engagement.**



Child Health & Early Intervention





Early Care and Education

When young children have access to high-quality early care and education programs, it improves their chances of success in kindergarten and beyond. During the COVID-19 pandemic, children's access to early care and education has become more important than ever.

The **Child Care Services Association's Ready Infant Toddler Classroom Initiative (RITC)** works with 4- and 5-star child care centers to improve the quality of services provided in their infant and toddler classrooms. In fiscal year (FY) 2019-2020, RITC engaged more than twice the number of child care staff as projected, working with 21 teachers in 10 classrooms at 5 child care centers. Services were provided remotely in the fourth quarter due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The **Orange County Public Library's Time to Read program** works to boost child care teachers' confidence in delivering literacy activities in their classrooms in order to improve the early literacy experiences of the children in their care. Time to Read supported 38 staff in 30 classrooms with Storytime-to-Go thematic bags throughout FY 2019-2020.

The **OCPYC Smart Start Child Care Subsidy Program** helps families access high-quality child care by assisting with child care tuition costs. Eligible families receive a voucher through the Orange County Department of Social Services, and tuition funds are paid directly to the child care program. Children receiving a Smart Start subsidy must enroll in child care centers or homes with a 4- or 5-star rating.

OCPYC Smart Start Subsidy Enhancements are also provided to 4- and 5-star child care facilities participating in Smart Start-funded activities to increase the quality of their program. These enhanced reimbursement rates are also provided on behalf of children receiving assistance through the Orange County Department of Social Services.

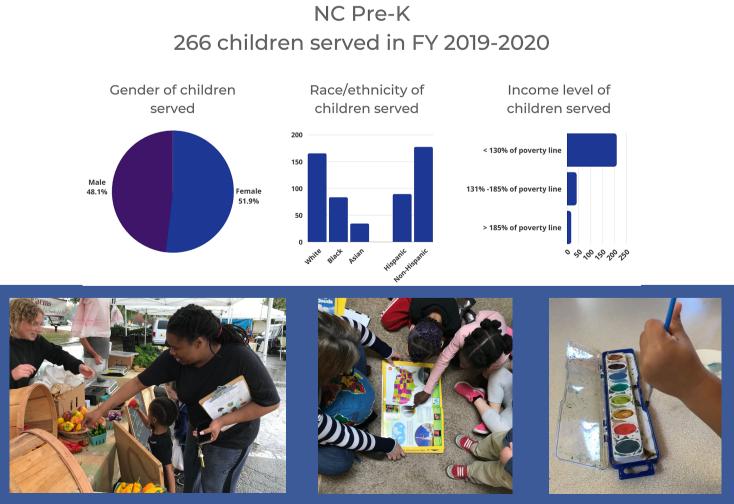
In addition to Smart Start subsidy funds, OCPYC provides financial and program oversight, as well as coaching and technical assistance, for the **NC Pre-K program.** NC Pre-K is designed to provide high-quality educational experiences to enhance school readiness for eligible four-year-olds. This year, children received a monthly book until the age of 5 through Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, and parents received text messages on language and literacy development through Ready 4K.

NC Pre-K

In March 2020, NC Pre-K classrooms in public schools transitioned to a virtual format as public schools closed due to COVID-19. Teachers utilized Teaching Strategies GOLD Portal as the communication tool to provide resources and educational activities to parents, monitor children's progress, and meet parent engagement needs.

Educational resources and activities were provided daily, along with weekly family check-ins. A Transition to Kindergarten Guide was created and provided as a family resource, along with extended summer learning resources and information on developmental stages and milestones.

Three out of four of Orange County's private NC Pre-K sites remained open during the pandemic. All centers followed applicable guidance and regulations for maintaining health and safety, and no COVID-19 cases were reported.



Healthy Starts for Infants and Toddlers: Shape NC

Healthy Starts for Infants and Toddlers: Shape NC (HSIT) promotes nutrition and active living through play for children ages birth to three years old. The project focuses on the time when early brain development is critical, and teacher interaction is most important for children to develop language and learning skills that can shape their entire lives.

The model provides a network of experts to focus on child nutrition, physical activity, outdoor learning, and breastfeeding/infant feeding. As part of HSIT, OCPYC is providing extensive technical assistance, professional development, and training in each of the program areas for directors and classroom teachers at five child care centers in Orange County. In each program area, goals are set and action plans developed to achieve best practices. Progress is measured with the NAPSACC (Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care) assessment survey.

As part of HSIT, in FY 2019-2020 OCPYC staff trained:



31 child care providers in Family-Style Dining



38 teachers on using NC Foundations for Early Learning and Development



36 child care providers in Be Active Kids



22 child care providers on the basics of Infant Feeding



17 child care providers on the steps to becoming a Breastfeeding Friendly Child Care Center

Following the trainings, center directors were eager to implement changes in their classroom practices. "Our teachers began adding more physical activity into each day with several types of resources from the Be Active Kids Training! They started using various types of materials to get the children moving more inside and outside the classroom. The children, parents and teachers have been much happier and more engaged since this training because everyone is more mentally and physically active!" said Kelli Dallin, Director of The Goddard School of Chapel Hill.

OCPYC staff also worked intensively with HSIT directors and staff at NC State University's Natural Learning Initiative (NLI) to plan and design improved infant and toddler Outdoor Learning Environments (OLEs) at each center. OCPYC collaborated with Wake County Smart Start to visit model Shape sites in Wake County, giving directors a sense of the possibilities for their own centers. By the end of FY 2019-2020, construction was underway at three centers, with the bulk of the work planned for FY 2020-2021.

Participating HSIT Centers:

- Future Scholars Childcare and Development Center, Hillsborough
- The Goddard School, Chapel Hill
- Kehillah Jewish Preschool, Chapel Hill
- Lil' Treasures Day Care, Hillsborough
- University Child Care Center (Victory Village), Chapel Hill

Model Early Learning Mentor Sites:

- Community School for People Under Six, Carrboro
- Spanish for Fun Academy, Chapel Hill

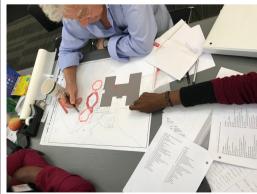














Child Health and Early Intervention

Children need to be healthy in order to grow and learn. OCPYC-funded programs support child health holistically, recognizing that many different factors contribute to overall health. Supporting children's mental, emotional, and physical health during the COVID-19 crisis is critical to ensuring their future well-being.

In FY 2019-2020, **OCPYC's Growing Up Healthy Initiative** worked with 8 child care centers to implement center-directed action plans to meet the Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care (GO NAPSACC) best practices in Child Nutrition, Breastfeeding and Infant Feeding, Farm to ECE, Oral Health, Physical Activity, Outdoor Play and Learning, and Screen Time. These efforts benefitted more than 500 children ages birth to five enrolled in the centers.

Growing Up Healthy is also engaged in the statewide Farm to Early Care and Education Collaborative, which supports child care centers in developing edible gardens, incorporating fresh and local foods in their menus, and helping children and families understand where and how food is grown – and how to be healthier eaters as a result.

In FY 2019-2020, Growing Up Healthy provided Farm to ECE education and training to more than 30 child care providers across the county. Growing Up Healthy also trained 29 child care providers in 12 centers in Be Active Kids, an interactive program for children ages birth to five that focuses on improving and maintaining the health of young children through physical activity and nutrition.

Through OCPYC's support of the **Chapel Hill Training Outreach Project's Assuring Better Child Health and Development (ABCD) Program**, training and technical assistance was provided to 21 primary care providers in Orange County to facilitate the identification of children who may benefit from early intervention services.

OCPYC's support of the **Chapel Hill Training Outreach Project's KidSCope Hispanic Outreach Program** helps provide critical, culturally-appropriate, evidence-based mental health therapy to Spanish-speaking children ages birth to five and their families in Orange County.

"Elvira is a mom from Ecuador with a 2-year-old boy who has speech difficulties. She was referred to us as she was feeling overwhelmed, depressed and anxious in her role as a parent. When I first met Elvira she did not have a positive outlook and found parenting quite difficult. Therapy services helped her develop the confidence she needed to be the mother and woman she wanted to be. She is now able to read the messages her child gives her and in doing so, she is able to fill his emotional needs. The mental health services that KidSCope has given her have helped her become stronger and more regulated, and a mom who is able to self-regulate can help her child to do the same."

-Sofia Moyano-Kleckner, Chapel Hill Training Outreach Project's KidSCope Hispanic Outreach Program





Masks are a new part of staying healthy in school!



Community Outreach and Engagement

We work with community partners to leverage connections and achieve maximum impact on the systems that affect young children in Orange County.

OCPYC hosts the **Orange County Campaign for Grade-Level Reading**, which is working to ensure reading proficiency by the end of third grade for all children, a key predictor of school success. More than 45 people, representing parents, community members, and 21 cross-sector organizations and agencies, have participated in developing action and implementation plans. In September 2019, 25 team members came together to lay out implementation strategies and an action plan. Our next steps are to develop a communications campaign and create opportunities for parents and caregivers to engage in their children's literacy learning.

OCPYC is a partner in the **Family Success Alliance**, a cradle-to-career initiative based in the Orange County Health Department that seeks to close the opportunity gap and end generational poverty in Orange County. As part of the collaborative's work funded by the United Way of the Greater Triangle, OCPYC provides fiscal services.

Center of Excellence: A Partnership Success Story

The Center of Excellence Child Care and Academy (COE) in Hillsborough opened in July 2017 and enrolled in OCPYC's Growing Up Healthy project in December 2017. Under director Cynthia Williams-Hills' leadership, they began working on improving best practices through the Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care (GO NAPSACC) and action planning in early 2018.

With OCPYC support, the center has transformed their Outdoor Learning Environments (OLEs), including the addition of paved riding pathways in both the preschool and toddler play areas. The center added three gazebo-covered decks (one for infants, one for toddlers and one for preschool) that are used as outdoor classrooms and high dry play areas during inclement weather. They have also added more shade trees, shrubs, blueberries and a fig tree.



Center of Excellence's Outdoor Learning Environment: before (left) and after (right).





In 2019 COE began working towards the Breastfeeding Friendly Child Care Designation, which included training their staff and making the center more welcoming to breastfeeding families. Their score of best practices on the GO NAPSACC increased by 24% in this program area between July 2018 and May 2020.

COE's engagement with OCPYC deepened in 2020 as the center joined the Farm to Early Care and Education Collaborative and OCPYC's Growing Up Green Conservation Project. Staff learned more about gardening with children, providing local foods for snacks, and were able to add four garden beds and a pollinator garden to their preschool Outdoor Learning Environment using mini-grants from these two programs.

The center has also participated in the Ready Infant Toddler Project funded by OCPYC through Child Care Services Association, and they became an NC Pre-K provider in the fall of 2020. "It is so rewarding to see the positive results of working together with a center director who is dedicated to improving their center. Cynthia sees the benefits for children, families and staff and has made the most of multiple programs and resources available through the Partnership," says Maria Hitt, Growing Up Healthy Project Manager.

"When we opened in 2017, our playgrounds were a blank canvas. Then Orange County Partnership for Young Children came along and our blank canvas became a work of art. The teachers and children love the changes we have made."

- Cynthia Williams-Hills, Center of Excellence Director/Owner





Family Support

We know that one of the best ways to support children ages birth through five is to support their families. Well-supported families are connected to the people, resources, and tools they need to raise healthy, happy children. Many of our Family Support programs were able to quickly pivot to a virtual format when COVID-19 hit, resulting in increased levels of parent/caregiver engagement and participation.

Literacy supports remained an anchoring priority even as our programs adapted to serve families' new needs related to COVID-19. To support early literacy and increase families' access to books,

OCPYC participates in **Dolly Parton's Imagination Library**. The program's mission is to foster a love of reading in children ages birth to five through the gift of a free, age-appropriate book sent to a child's home every month. In FY 2019-2020, more than 23,000 books were

delivered to 2,562 children in Orange County. Many parents expressed how much this program meant to them at a time when schools and libraries were closed due to COVID-19.

With our support, **Orange County Literacy Council's Family Literacy Program** served 43 parents/caregivers, with 88% reporting that their child improved in at least one area of reading or that they felt more prepared for their child to start kindergarten as a result of their participation in the program, and 96% reporting an increase in the frequency with which they read to their children.



Children who receive free books every month in Orange County through Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

"I wanted to say thank you for making Dolly Parton's Imagination Library available in our area. It has made a huge difference in my four-year-old's interest in reading. We struggled to get him to read with us, but now he checks the mail daily to see if he has a new 'Dolly book', and our whole household is excited when one arrives. The books he's received are some of his favorite and most-cherished books because they're so well curated for his age and interests. We also appreciate that deliveries have continued during the pandemic since we're not able to go to the library to browse books to see what catches his attention and because he no longer gets exposure to more books at preschool. A huge thank you to everyone involved!"

-Ellen Cabaguncan, parent

With OCPYC support, the **Orange County Rape Crisis Center** held nine **Stewards of Children Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Trainings**, including three trainings in Spanish. All participating caregivers reported that they learned how to talk to children about child sexual abuse and how to minimize the chances of child sexual abuse occurring.

With OCPYC's support in FY 2019-2020, 15 parents/caregivers completed the **Chapel Hill Training Outreach Project's KidSCope Incredible Years Toddler Parenting Education Program** in English, and 8 completed the program in Spanish. Ninety-two percent of parents reported an increased sense of parenting competence as a result of participating in the program.

OCPYC's Reach Out and Read program trains pediatric providers to coach parents at well visits about the critical role that reading and language-rich interactions play in their daily routine. During each well visit children receive a new, culturally- and developmentally-appropriate book to take home and read with their parents. In FY 2019-2020 OCPYC worked with two medical practices, UNC Children's Primary Care Clinic and the Orange County Health Department, and provided 1,389 age-appropriate books to support the practices.

Orange County Department of Social Services' Community Response Program

The Orange County Department of Social Services' Community Response Program (CRP) provides family-centered services for Orange County families with children ages birth to five who have been referred to Child Protective Services with reports closed or screened out at intake. The program provides resources to more than 60 families per year, actively engaging 30 of these families in prevention services focused on building Family Protective Factors. CRP is able to reach families in their time of need to provide support, education, and resources to help reduce risk factors for child maltreatment and further involvement with Child Protective Services.

"I love this program because it allows me to be so flexible in meeting a family's needs," says CRP Social Worker Alexa Hamel. Depending on the family's needs and preferences, she can offer support through phone calls, texts, or in-person visits. One particularly effective approach is parent support groups. Before COVID-19, the groups were held weekly and included dinner and child care to make it as easy as possible for parents to attend. The groups quickly pivoted to an online format when COVID-19 hit, and demand increased. "Parents are asking to do more groups. Especially with COVID-19, parents need more contact with other parents to share challenges as well as successes," she says.

Once CRP services were offered virtually, referrals and family engagement increased. Alexa notes that she still has the ability to visit families in person – outside, socially-distanced, and with masks on – if they prefer. She has also been able to use program funds for regular porch "drop-offs" of health and safety supply kits for families that include masks, sanitizer,



thermometers, and gloves, as well as bubbles, sidewalk chalk, books, and puzzles.

COVID-19 Response

In Mid-March, with the COVID-19 pandemic growing, schools closed and North Carolinians were issued stay-at-home orders. With no time to prepare, everything changed. Parents suddenly found themselves without child care, juggling working from home, working on the front lines, or facing losing their jobs completely. Child care centers struggled with whether and how to stay open, and how to stay safe in the face of a virus we knew very little about. In the early days of COVID-19, we were all building the plane while we were flying it.

OCPYC responded by offering immediate support to child care centers in the form of weekly virtual meetings co-hosted by the Child Care Services Association (CCSA). These weekly meetings provided a critical link to information, resources, and support during the early days of the pandemic, and are still being held eight months later. Calls are typically attended by 20+ people including directors, local agency leads, licensing and health care consultants, and other trusted experts.

OCPYC was designated as the county liaison to child care centers by the North Carolina Partnership for Children and the North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education. OCPYC's Healthy Starts for Infants and Toddlers Coordinator Shawna Daniels says, "we surveyed centers about their materials and supply needs, created and distributed a list of vendors, and provided direct assistance to center directors when requested." OCPYC also held trainings for directors on policy-writing to promote health and safety in the new COVID-19 world.

Many of our programs were able to quickly transition to a virtual format, in many cases leading to increased levels of family participation and engagement.

"Children enjoyed being online in Family Literacy class with their moms. First, we sang and acted out 'If You're Happy and You Know It Clap Your Hands!' and the children did a great job of clapping, stomping, hopping, turning around, and 'touching the sky.'

Our pre-k classroom teachers later shared *One Red Sock* by Jennifer Sattler. The children loved this story, and they began to hold up their own feet to show the crazy socks they had on that day. One almost-three-year-old ran off to find her own red and white striped crazy sock, put it on and showed it to us. Parents, kids and teachers all laughed and laughed over this funny book.

Instructing online, we can still develop children's gross motor skills through moving and singing. And further, we can support fine motor skills, and parent-child-teacher literacy interactions through reading online. We have found that we can have fun with books, even in remote instruction!"

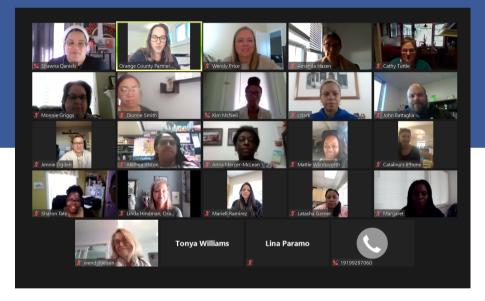
-Teacher Virginia, Orange County Literacy Council Family Literacy Program

"OCPYC and CCSA have been amazing resources for child care providers in Orange County. Prior to COVID-19, they organized monthly Orange County Director meetings, which I participated in, where child care directors were offered time to learn ways to enhance and maintain the quality of care they provide.

During the pandemic, these organizations stepped up to offer virtual Directors' meetings weekly. The response has been amazing, and providers have been able to gain support and knowledge during a time that they really needed it. The relationships that had been established prior to COVID-19 created a seamless transition to virtual Directors' meetings.

I am grateful to know that there are partners in OCPYC and CCSA who provide such intentional support to child care providers and families. I serve 17 counties as the health nurse resource for child care providers, and I frequently describe the way these meetings have been organized to other county partners in an effort to have them offer similar support to providers in other counties I serve."

-Lisa Shifflett, RN, CCHC-C; Central Regional Child Care Health Consultant Nurse, North Carolina Child Care Health and Safety Resource Center



"The weekly Orange County Directors' Meeting has been very helpful in obtaining detailed and specific information from individual leaders in their field who support our work as child care providers. It is helpful for everyone to hear the same message at the same time and to be able to ask questions for clarification. It is helpful for Directors to be able to share their thoughts about COVID, constant changes, daily issues and to relieve stress. These meetings have been timely, supportive and beneficial since we cannot meet in person. I truly appreciate this as one of the current services of CCSA and OCPYC; and others. This is a great resource for us."

-Anna Mercer-McLean; Director, Community School for People Under 6

Partners & Programs

Smart Start Programs

Chapel Hill Training Outreach Project – KidSCope

Assuring Better Child Health and Development (ABCD) KidSCope Hispanic Outreach Project Incredible Years Toddler Parenting Education

Child Care Services Association

Ready Infant Toddler Classroom Initiative

Orange County Department of Social Services

Smart Start Child Care Subsidy Community Response Program

Orange County Literacy Council

Family Literacy Program

Orange County Partnership for Young Children

Smart Start Subsidy Enhancements NC Pre-K Match NC Pre-K Quality Enhancement and Support Growing up Healthy Reach Out and Read

Orange County Public Library

Time to Read

Orange County Rape Crisis Center

Safe Families Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Program

Community Partners

Thank you to our community partners involved in:

Orange County Campaign for Grade-Level Reading Family Success Alliance Growing Up Healthy

Staff

Brandon Cutler, Social Work Intern Shawna Daniels, Healthy Starts Coordinator Jaelyn Harris, Administrative and Program Assistant Linda Hindman, Associate Director Maria Hitt, Project Manager, Growing Up Healthy Kimberley McNeil, Program Coordinator Robin Pulver, Executive Director JJ Richardson, Communications and Engagement Manager Dionne Smith, Early Childhood Coordinator Teresa Wright, Administrative and Contracts Manager

Contractors

Lindsay Owen, Finance Manager

Board of Directors

Executive Committee

Kerry Moore, Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools, *President* Lucinda Munger, Orange County Public Library, *Vice-President* Siobhan Colgan, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, *Secretary* Jean Mankowski, Carolina Institute for Developmental Disabilities, *Treasurer* Stephen Jackson, Consultant, *Past Officer*

Jamezetta Bedford, Orange County Commissioner Mia Burroughs, Ipas Sue Florence, Cedar Grove Community Center Carmen Huerta-Bapat, Carolina First Matt Hughes, Hillsborough Board of Commissioners Adriana Martinez, Spanish for Fun Academy Quintana Stewart, Orange County Health Department

Sincere thanks to Braxton Foushee and Christopher Brook, who served on the OCPYC Board of Directors and completed their terms in FY 2019-2020.

Funding Partners

Thank you to our funding partners

We appreciate the support of our funding partners for FY 2019-2020: The North Carolina Partnership for Children, North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education, United States Department of Agriculture-National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Triangle Community Foundation, Oak Foundation through the North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation, NC State University Farm to ECE Collaborative, Halle Family Foundation through Jewish Charities of Baltimore, Orange County, Town of Carrboro, Town of Chapel Hill.

Thank you to our individual donors

We appreciate our individual donors, who provided support for OCPYC, and the contributions of our donors through the State Employees Combined Campaign, who help us to continue to serve the children of Orange County.

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Statement of Receipts, Expenditures and Net Assets for	or the Fiscal Year Ended J	lune 30, 2020.		
Receipts		Expenditures		
State Grants	\$ 1,641,535	Personnel and Contracted Services		783,588
(Including Smart Start and NC Pre-K)		Non-Fixed Operating Expenses		55,196
Federal Grants	1,459,807	Fixed Charges		62,379
Local Grants	15,338	Property and Equipment		9,771
(Including Town of Chapel Hill, Town of Carrboro & Ora	Services/Contracts/Grants		3,046,653	
Private Contributions & Fundraising Events	67,176	Total Expenditures	\$	3,957,587
Interest Income	299			
Sales Tax Refunds	3,263	Excess/Deficiency of Receipts over Expenditures		(218,544
Other Receipts	31,625	Net Assets at the Beginning of the Year		333,966
Total Receipts	\$ 3,219,043	Net Assets at Year End	\$	115,422
Smart Start Subsidy Program	520,000			
		Net Assets Consisted of:		
Total Funds Administered	\$ 3,739,043	Cash on Deposit	\$	115,422

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"OCPYC ensures that the youngest in our community get the best child care possible. The staff members are experts at this work and I'm honored to do my part to support them."

- Mia Burroughs, Board Member, Orange County Partnership for Young Children