

# 2019

## Annual Report



# We engaged. We empowered. We achieved.

## Dear Friend,

*“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” – Margaret Mead*

Margaret Mead’s quote aptly describes our achievements over this past year. ACNJ’s campaign to develop stronger policies and programs for children from birth to age 3 has grown exponentially. Our collective voices helped bring in millions in state and federal funding to improve New Jersey’s child care system and expand high-quality preschool. In addition, parents will now have more time to bond with their newborns, thanks to New Jersey’s strengthened paid family leave program.

Our work would not be possible without your support, your voice or your advocacy. More people joined with ACNJ than ever before, lending their name and sharing their stories to create a powerful narrative.

As a result of our reputation for independence and a steadfast commitment to children and families, ACNJ was also chosen to lead the statewide non-profit Census 2020 outreach effort this year. Effective advocacy requires accurate data. We have a once-in-a-decade opportunity to ensure that all of New Jersey’s residents, especially our youngest children, will count in the 2020 Census.

Please join me in celebrating this year’s achievements, as we look forward to the work ahead in creating brighter futures for New Jersey’s children.



Gerard Theirs  
*Chair, Board of Trustees*



Cecilia Zalkind  
*President & CEO*

Gerard Theirs

Cecilia Zalkind

## 2019 Highlights

### January

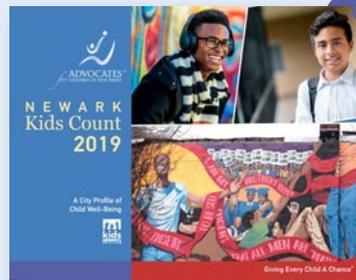
#### The Undercount of Kids in the 2020 Census

ACNJ convenes a forum focused on promoting a complete count of children under age 5 – the age group with the greatest risk of being missed in the decennial count.

### February

ACNJ draws attention to increased lead levels among Newark’s children, up for the first time since 2011.

#### New Jersey expands Paid Family Leave.



### March

ACNJ releases *Newark Kids Count*, in partnership with My Brother’s Keeper Newark, and includes a special section on the city’s young men of color.

Mayor Ras Baraka responds to *Newark Kids Count* data, announcing plans to decrease violence, published in an op-ed in *The Star-Ledger*.

*Newark Kids Count panel discussion, led by youth moderators Manuel Mejia and Dionysus Augus.*



## Achieving Big Wins for Children

**\$24 million**

in increased state child care funds

**\$20 million**

to expand state-funded preschool to additional districts

**\$9 million**

in state funding for census outreach



**102,000+**  
website views

## Engaging and Empowering Critical Voices

A crucial piece to ACNJ's advocacy is our collaboration with our many partners. From mobilizing families and child care providers to rally at the State House to equipping advocates with the resources and tools they need, we ensure children's voices are heard.



Child care providers make the case for increased funding at May news conference at the State House.

### April

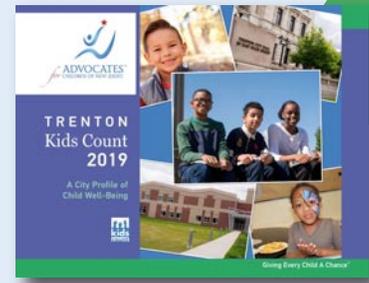
ACNJ awarded **Pritzker Children's Initiative grant** to continue statewide prenatal-to-3 advocacy agenda, with a focus on coordinating early childhood systems and developing sustainable financing strategies in early care and education.

In partnership with the **National Institute for Early Education Research**, ACNJ moves forward with statewide efforts to ensure successful preschool expansion, presenting at 38 meetings with school districts and providers.

### May

ACNJ delivers a petition to **Governor Murphy and legislative leadership** with more than 1,100 signatures from child care providers and supporters, calling for additional child care subsidy funding in the state budget.

**Strolling Thunder New Jersey 2019** brings 350 parents, advocates and young children to rally at the State House, bringing attention to what babies need to thrive: strong families, healthy starts and positive early learning environments.



### June

ACNJ releases **Trenton Kids Count**, in partnership with the Burke Foundation and the Smith Family Foundation of New Jersey. This data book is the first *Trenton Kids Count* report in nearly 20 years.

**Governor Murphy signs the 2020 budget into law** that includes \$24 million in increased child care funds, \$20 million to expand preschool to additional districts and \$9 million for state and local census outreach.

**180+** mentions in the news

# Making Kids Count

1,400

early childhood champions engaged in direct advocacy

500

parents/caregivers and professionals received information and assistance regarding the legal rights of children

500

stakeholders participated in regional forums on improving child welfare in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, sponsored by ACNJ and the NJ Dept. of Children and Families

252

parents, caregivers and advocates trained on education law and advocacy



Effective advocacy depends on strong data. Much of ACNJ's Kids Count reports rely on census data to build a picture of child well-being across the state. As New Jersey and the rest of the nation prepare for the upcoming 2020 Census, ACNJ is working tirelessly with national groups, state officials and community leaders to ensure an accurate count.

## Sunday Star Ledger

NEWARK'S WATER CRISIS

### We must protect kids from lead exposure

Cecilia Zalkind and Peter Chen Guest Columnists

Recent media coverage of Newark's water crisis has focused on striking images of bottled water distribution and protests outside the MTV Video Music Awards. In response to the high lead levels, the city and state have begun an ambitious plan to replace the city's aging lead water pipes in under three years. Essex County already plans to lend \$120 million toward the cause.

## September

### Lead exposure: not just a Newark problem

ACNJ's op-ed, published in *The Star Ledger*, reinforces the need to implement a comprehensive prevention strategy to eliminate lead exposure once and for all.

**Governor Murphy directs \$30 million in federal funding to child care.** With \$24 million in state funds, this brings the total child care investment to \$54 million. The Murphy Administration says it is "making child care a priority given its essential role in supporting working families and the importance of quality care in early childhood development."

## November

### Kids Count County Pocket Guide and Rankings

Find out how children are faring in New Jersey's 21 counties, in the areas of family economic stability, health, safety and education.

## July

ACNJ takes the lead on statewide census outreach, with special emphasis on improving the count of the state's young children.

**Trenton community conversations begin.** Following the release of *Trenton Kids Count*, community members discuss how to unite and strengthen policies for children and families in the capital city.

125+

participants in Kids Count Community Conversations

December

4<sup>th</sup>

2019

## Save the Date:

December 4, 2019

ACNJ's 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Breakfast Celebration

8:30 a.m.

The Clubhouse at Galloping Hills

Country Club

3 Golf Drive

Kenilworth, NJ 07033

***A heartfelt thank you to all of our supporters for your steadfast dedication to New Jersey's children and for your generous donations to ACNJ in 2018. Our work would not be possible without you.***

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## About Us

*Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ) is the trusted, independent voice putting children's needs first for more than 40 years. A cornerstone of ACNJ's success is our independence. We are non-partisan and accept no state funding for advocacy, giving us the freedom to speak up for children who have no voice and no vote.*

*Our work results in:*

- better laws and policies,
- more effective funding and
- stronger services for children and families.

*This means more children are given the chance to grow up **safe, healthy** and **educated**.*

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[www.acnj.org](http://www.acnj.org)