

Reflect Refocus Renew

Preparing for the future

2019 ANNUAL REPORT





Our vision

All children in Greater Houston have the high-quality learning opportunities to achieve their full potential.

Our mission

We meaningfully improve the quality of early childhood education and care for Greater Houston's young children through those who are most influential in their lives.

A message from the President and CEO

Greetings!

What an exciting year we had in 2019! As a good steward of your generous gifts supporting our mission of meaningfully improving the quality of early childhood education, our agency took part in an arduous self-review. The eight-month process was a defining period for Collaborative for Children. Leadership and staff made a courageous decision to use our expertise and resources to transform traditional early childhood education as we know it today.

Collaborative for Children has done a phenomenal job serving Houston-area caregivers, parents and children for more than three decades. Its longevity and life-changing work is what lured me – a lifelong educator – to the agency two years ago. However, no matter how successful an organization may be, it must occasionally take time to reflect on its journey, so it can refocus and renew its mission and vision.

From spring to winter, we brainstormed with colored markers and drawing boards, huddled in small group discussions, and sought input from our stakeholders. We examined the current early education landscape, researched our competitors, and devised a bold plan.

With many years of experience in early learning and research, our team is creating innovative learning strategies focused on improving child outcomes. We want to ensure all children - particularly those in underserved areas – are kindergarten-ready and prepared to compete for jobs that do not exist today.

Additionally, we are creating a large database to enable the tracking of student progress. This new system will pinpoint where inequities lie and deploy resources to neighborhoods where they are most needed.

We will continue to work closely with those who influence young children the most - child care teachers, parents and caregivers. But now, we will be more intentional in our efforts to help them in preparing our young children for the future workforce through an innovative integrated approach.

Looking back over the year, I can proudly say that our agency emerged from this self-examination as a stronger and nimbler organization that is ready to meet this fast-paced, ever-changing world head on, so that our community's children can do the same.

As our supporters, I hope you are just as impressed as I am by the tenacity of our team. Despite the disruptions that come with change, they have remained focused and committed to serving our community's children. I applaud them for their work.

In the fall of 2020, I will present our Strategic Plan for 2021-2025 to the community. What has been described thus far is just a small slice. I am eager to share the entire game-changing plan for our agency, our community, and most importantly, our young children.

As you read through our annual report, you will learn more about the year's highlights, including a \$3 million grant award from the Texas Workforce Commission to develop a statewide business accelerator program to strengthen the state's child care system and a Blue Ribbon designation presented to our home-visiting program.

I want to thank Collaborative for Children's Board of Directors for their leadership and support throughout the year. I also want to express my gratitude to our many donors who believe as we do, that early childhood education MATTERS.



Warmest regards,

Melanie Johnson

Melanie Johnson, Ed.D.

A Note from the Board Chair

Supporters and Community Partners,

Let me first say **thank you** for your support of time, talent and donations throughout the year. Whether it was a big or a small gift, we appreciate you partnering with Collaborative for Children to ensure all Houston-area children have access to high-quality early childhood education.

I became involved with the agency many years ago as a client who used its quality child care search services, Findchildcarenow.org, and have been honored to spend the past six years as a member of Collaborative for Children's Board of Directors. What intrigued me then about the agency was its mission to meaningfully improve the quality of early childhood education. Now, as I serve my last year as the Board Chair, I remain fascinated by the tireless work of this agency to level the educational playing field for all children, especially those in persistently under-resourced areas.

This year, the agency touched the lives of more than **103,000 children** in the 13-county Houston-Galveston region. And, to underscore its impact in the community, Collaborative for Children received the **2019 Outstanding Child-Focused Non-Profit Award** from Children at Risk for its grassroots efforts to knock down barriers to early learning, neighborhood by neighborhood.

I am also thrilled about what lies ahead for the agency. As Dr. Melanie Johnson, the agency's president and CEO, mentioned in her opening message, Collaborative for Children is ready to take traditional early childhood education to a higher level. With the child in mind, the agency will relentlessly pursue excellence and innovate boldly, fearlessly and courageously.

What does this mean for our community's young children?

It means more children will become kindergarten ready. It means more children will have an opportunity to learn 21st century skills, including social-emotional and critical thinking skills. It means more children will be prepared for the 21st century workforce.

And, with your continued support, this means Collaborative for Children can continue to close historical learning achievement gaps and ensure more children have a promising future.

Once again, thank you for your support. **You** help make all this splendid work possible.



Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laura Sayavedra". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Laura Sayavedra
Chair, Collaborative for Children Board of Directors



What We Do

Collaborative for Children supplies direct services to affect positive change in early childhood education. We offer an integrated approach that equips parents and teachers to help children achieve stronger outcomes. This approach includes using technology, excellence in all sectors and other tools that foster positive academic achievement and long-term success.

Why we do it

Far too many young children in the Houston region lack access to high-quality early childhood education and care. In fact, 50% of Harris County children in low-income families live in quality child care deserts.* This inequity leads to children entering kindergarten without a solid foundation in early learning, which can have a negative impact on their success in school and in life.

How we do it

Our early childhood specialists go to where the inequities lie. Every day they:

- Coach and mentor teachers in the classroom.
- Provide parents with child development support and education in their homes.
- Invites parents and caregivers to classrooms for education and training.
- Assist child care directors/owners in building viable, sustainable businesses in underserved areas to strengthen our community's child care system.

Call to action for our community

We all must invest in quality early childhood education because our future depends on it. Research shows that children with access to early childhood education are more successful in school, more likely to graduate from high school, more likely to earn a college degree and more likely to contribute positively to their community.

*Information from Children at Risk

2019

Our Reach

Children served in the Greater Houston region

103,359

Parents and early education professionals received information about Collaborative for Children services or other topics of interest related to positive child development

11,529



2019

Quality Improvement

College Bound from Birth

This three-year intensive program helps child care centers in underserved neighborhoods improve their teaching, curriculum and classroom environments. This year, our College Bound from Birth team celebrated the graduation of Bright Stars Academy, Freedom Academy, MD Anderson YMCA and Wesley Community Center - all located in Northside Houston.

Improvement & Accreditation

Our assessors and consultants work one on one with child care directors to help their child care programs become Texas Rising Star certified or to improve their star-rating in the state's quality improvement rating system. To earn TRS (Texas Rising Star) certification, child care programs must complete a detailed application and a meticulous assessment.

This year, our team significantly increased the number of 4-star rated child care centers in the 13-county Houston-Galveston region. Four stars is the highest rating for Texas Rising Star-certified centers.

○ From 38% 4-star centers to 83% 4-star centers

Professional Development

Early education educators play a pivotal role in the development of children from birth to 5. Through our Institute of Early Learning, we offer a variety of professional classes both in-person and online to equip teachers with knowledge, skills and resources needed to provide a quality learning experience for all children.

○ 9,559

hours coaching and mentoring
child care directors and teachers

○ 41,498

teachers, directors and assistant directors
received professional development training

○ 12,408

training hours offered by Collaborative for
Children to teachers, directors, and other
child care professionals

What Child Care Providers Say

Our programs help child care centers and in-home child care centers improve their early education curriculum and classroom environments. Our goal is to ensure more young children have access to high-quality early childhood education, so they are kindergarten ready.

We work with some phenomenal, hard-working child care owners and directors in our three-year improvement program. These are some of their testimonials:



“I wanted the teachers to be the best they can be and that meant I had to be the best I could be.

Prior to the program, they (parents) saw us as a babysitting service. We are no longer that. We are educators. They now notice how organized everything is, how in sync it is, and how confident my teachers are. Everything we do now is intentional and it's very child centered.”

Angela Garcia

Director at YMCA Children's Academy at MD Anderson



“Since we have had Collaborative at our center, the changes in our children has been amazing.

They're more engaged. We've been able to expand our curriculum in the classroom due to Collaborative and the children love it.

My relationship with my mentors is amazing. They're very helpful. Everything I got from them has worked and I'm ready to pass that on to my teachers.

Ciara Vaughn

Assistant Director at Sharpstown Kindercare



“I attended a meeting about the program. What really caught my attention was when the speaker said **we are preparing kids for a smooth transition from a day care environment to a school environment, and it all starts at birth.**

I was assigned a mentor and my mentor taught me that not only do children start learning at birth, there are also certain things you need to have in place. It's almost like a partnership between the day care director, teachers and the parents. Thank you Collaborative for giving me the opportunity to be a part of the program.”

Gwendolyn Williams

Director of Bright Stars Academy

“We really didn't have that high quality. Now, if you look at our center, the teachers are doing languages, they're having lesson plans done, they know what to talk about in the classroom, they're doing circle time properly.

Everything that I wanted when I first started is actually happening. They really improved the quality of my center.”

Rozina Jamal

Director/Owner of Creative Care Academy
Participant in Collaborative for Children
three-year improvement program



New Opportunities

Collaborative for Children receives grant to build groundbreaking child care business accelerator

In the fall, Collaborative for Children received a \$3 million grant from the Texas Workforce Commission to create the state's first-ever business accelerator to help increase the number of quality child care centers and family child care homes across the state, especially in underserved areas, and to strengthen Texas' child care system.

The business accelerator provides early childhood providers with eight-weeks of intensive business training based on best practices in budgeting, performance management and emergency preparedness. This training will enable child care owners and directors to build and maintain sustainable businesses so that early learners can be optimally prepared for K-12 school.

The business accelerator brings together resources from Texas A&M University's Bush School of Government and Public Policy Center for Nonprofits and Philanthropy to develop several online modules and to provide world-class research expertise to an integrated, multi-phase business training program.

"We are thrilled that the state has entrusted us with this grant to build a program that will provide the support so many child care programs need, particularly those in quality child care deserts," said Dr. Melanie Johnson, president and CEO of Collaborative for Children. "Child care is a priority for every community. It makes it possible for parents to earn a living and for businesses to have a stable workforce, but most importantly, it prepares our youngest citizens for the 21st century workforce. We must gird our child care system so that child care programs not only survive, but also thrive after the next crisis."



Family Engagement

We know that parents are a child's first teacher. We also know that some parents need support in nurturing their child's development. Collaborative for Children's Parents as Teachers (PAT) program offers in-home family visits and other resources to help parents learn activities that stimulate brain development and learn parenting techniques. The program serves families with children ages 0 to 5 years old.

In October 2019, the agency's PAT program earned the prestigious Parents as Teachers Blue Ribbon Affiliate designation from the Parents as Teachers National Center, Inc., for providing high-quality services to the Houston-area community. The endorsement validates that our program is one of the top-performing PAT affiliates within PATNC's international network. Moreover, it affirms that our agency adheres to the evidence-based PAT model and delivers high-quality services that positively affects families and children in our community.

272 CHILDREN SERVED | 229 FAMILIES SERVED

IN PARENTS AS TEACHERS PROGRAM

Like many new moms, SiSi Liu was full of questions about how to raise her toddler sons. Why does he sleep this way? Is he eating enough? Why does he act this way?

All are valid questions for any parent – new or veteran. However, when she and her husband, Tai Le, moved from Pittsburgh to Houston two years ago, the couple did not know anyone. Liu had no friends or family to consult about her concerns. Then one day, she discovered a flier about Collaborative for Children's Parents as Teachers program and immediately contacted us.

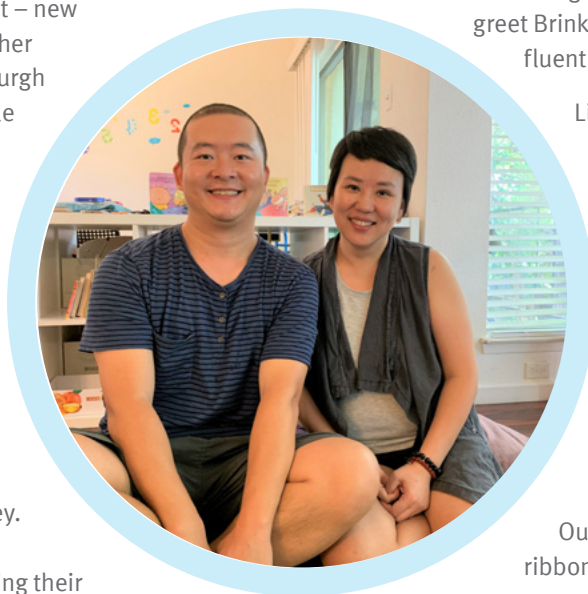
Soon after applying for the program, Liu began receiving home visits from one of our early childhood specialists, Dekia Brinkley. Liu usually has a list of parenting questions ready to ask Brinkley during their bi-monthly visits. Liu says Brinkley's support helps her feel more at ease in her new role as a mom.

Brinkley also teaches Liu how to use age-appropriate toys and books to help her two sons learn and understand English, while still encouraging the family to communicate in their native language, Mandarin. The toddlers, who greet Brinkley in English, are becoming more fluent in their second language each day.

Liu regularly attends the Parents as Teachers parenting sessions and family activities, where she has met several new friends and bonded with other families.

She says she always recommends the program to other families in her community. In fact, her word of mouth promotion has sometimes created a waiting list for our program.

Our local program received a blue ribbon designation from the National PAT.



“I think every new mommy needs the same thing,” Liu says. “The first time faced with the baby is a big responsibility.”

Leading the Way with Top Talent

Collaborative for Children has a fantastic team of early childhood education specialists. Here are couple of examples of our team's dedication to serving our community's young children.



Christina Alton

Lead Early Childhood Mentor

Alton is one of 35 early care and education professionals from across the U.S. selected as an Exchange Leader by the Exchange Leadership Initiative, Inc. Her photo and personal statement were published in the 2019 July/August issue of Exchange Magazine, a national professional magazine.

The Exchange Leadership Initiative selects candidates who show:

- Passion for young children and their families and the field of early care and education.
- Vision, determination and persistence.
- Willingness, eagerness and curiosity to continue to learn and grow.

Alton is shown on the left in the photo.



Carmen Hernandez

Early Education Specialist

Carmen Hernandez, one of our early education specialists, received the Champion for Children and Families Award from the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services' Prevention and Early Intervention programs. She was honored at the annual Partners in Prevention Conference in Austin in November 2019.

This award, also known as the Direct Service Award, is given to “an individual who demonstrates exceptional achievement and outstanding commitment to the program mission and vision and has a deep understanding of the aspirations of the youth, parents and caregivers he or she serves. The individual also demonstrates the ability to empower clients in meeting their individual goals, helping clients achieve goals via referrals, service connections and community partnerships, and whom has gone beyond to acquire additional contributions or innovations to their community.”

Hernandez's manager and team members say she consistently goes the extra mile to support and connect her families with the resources they need.

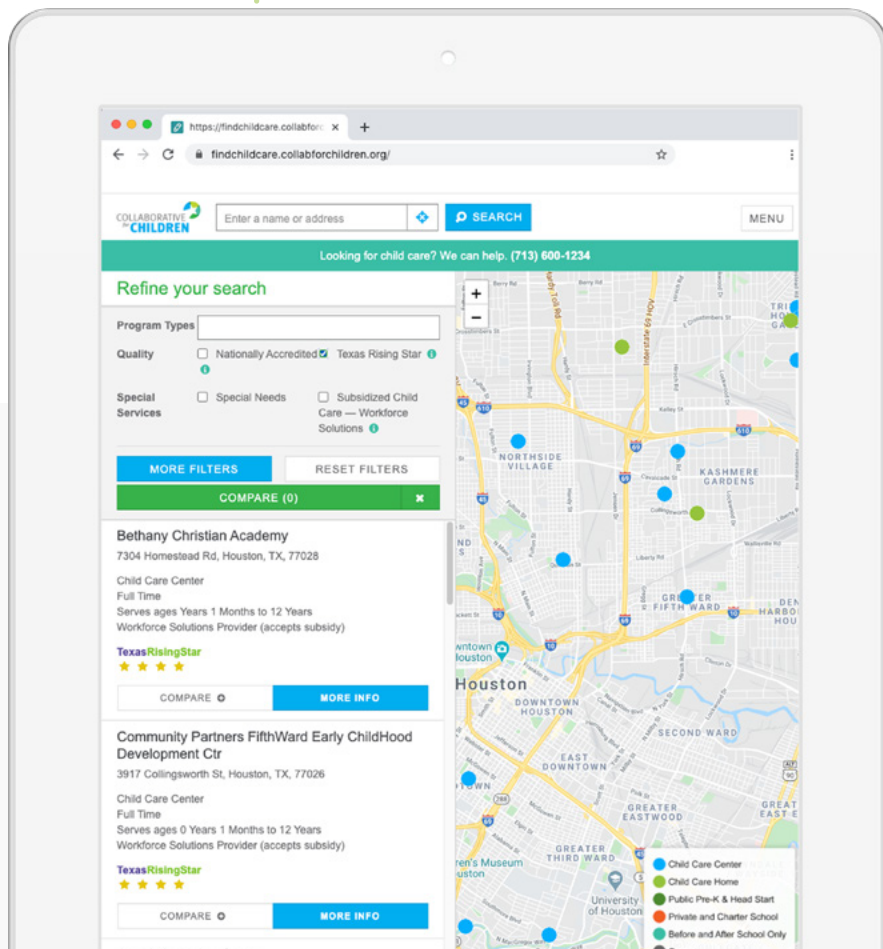
FindChildCareNow.org

in 2019

37,380

searches conducted by 25,548 people

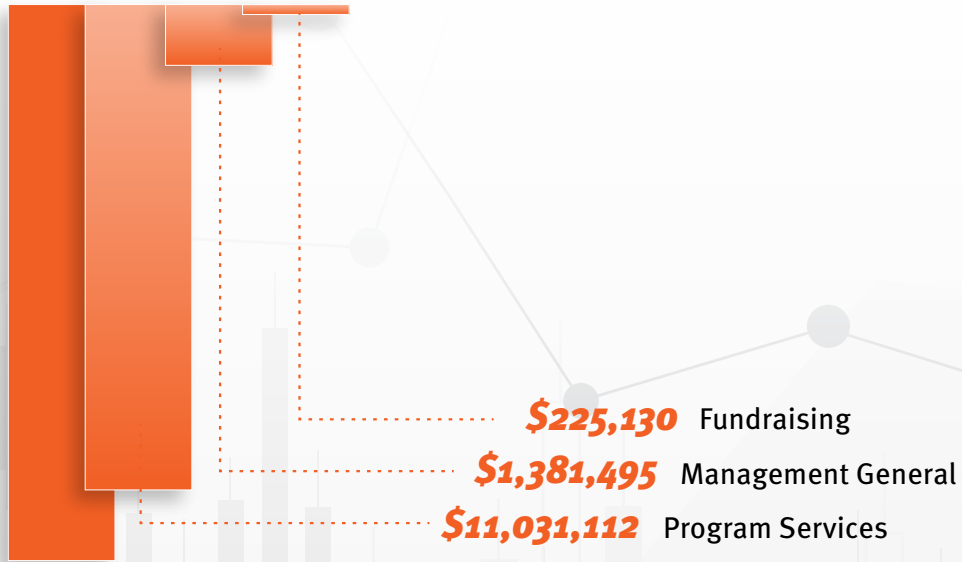
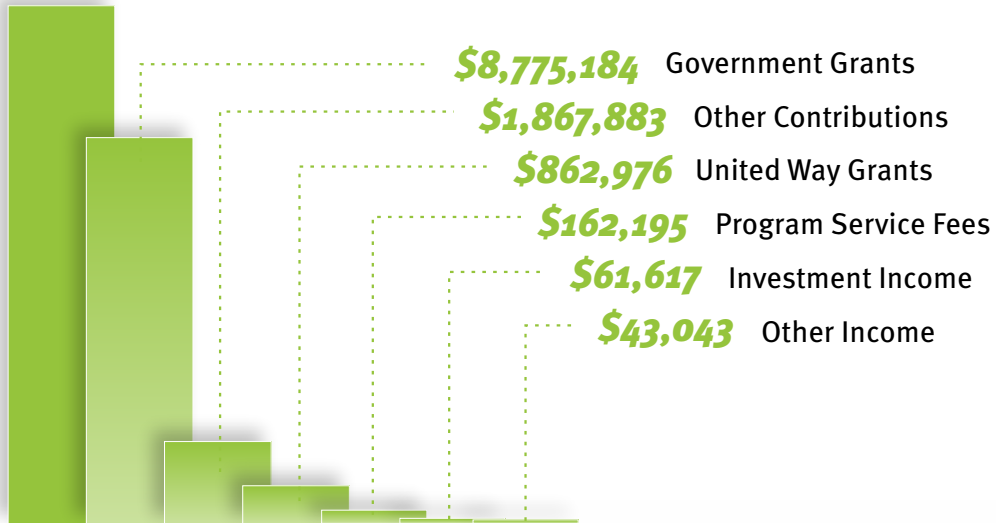
FindChildCareNow.org is our online database that enables parents to easily find high-quality child care in their own neighborhood. The user-friendly portal provides parents with all the information they need to know about a child care program, including licensing, teacher-student ratio and quality rating under Texas Rising Star, the state's quality improvement and rating system.



Financials

\$11,772,898

Total Revenue



\$12,637,737

Total Expenses

Summary

	Total	With Donor Restrictions	Without Donor Restrictions
Changes in Net Assets	(864,839)	(1,303,362)	438,523
Net Assets, Beginning of Year	3,424,797	2,712,347	712,450
Net Assets, End of Year	2,559,958	1,408,985	1,150,973

Longtime supporter relishes his involvement with agency

When Dr. Robert Austin became involved with Collaborative for Children 15 years ago, he was not only intrigued by the agency's work, but also delighted that it aligned so well with his decades-long work as a pediatric physician. Both focus on the welfare of our community's young children, especially those whose families have limited resources.

Dr. Austin first learned about the agency in 2006 after meeting then-President and CEO Carol Shattuck at an event. He later invited Shattuck to his office for a chat that ended with him asking if he could serve on the agency's board.

“ I really thought they (the nonprofit) were going in the right direction, and it was congruent with the things I was doing,” Dr. Austin said. “I felt I could offer something, and I could learn a lot.”

Dr. Austin joined the board that same year and soon afterward retired from his career of more than 50 years. He is now serving his fifth term on the board.

Before moving to Houston, Dr. Austin was the executive director of the Syracuse Neighborhood Health Center in New York, one of the first federally qualified programs set up to provide comprehensive health services for communities lacking adequate care. In Houston, he ran his own practice before joining Texas Children's Hospital, where he started Project Medical Home in 2000. The health care program focuses on promoting good health for economically disadvantaged children and their families in the Houston area.

While serving on Collaborative for Children's Board of Directors, Dr. Austin says he initially learned that there were many child care challenges that had yet to be addressed by the community. For instance, he discovered that many child care centers do not provide the quality early learning necessary to prepare young children for kindergarten.



“ This is extremely important because we have learned so much more about the brain and the importance of the period between ages 0 and 3 and child care,” he said.

Children's brains grow the fastest between ages 0-3, which is the best time for early learning. It is crucial that young children have early learning experiences, as well as nurturing relationships and good health. This combination helps to stimulate the brain and build a solid foundation for success in school and in life.

Many young children in underserved areas do not have these opportunities. That's why Collaborative for Children launched an intensive child care improvement program for child care centers in underserved neighborhoods in 2008. Dr. Austin was instrumental in devising the program, which promotes quality early education and care, and encourages parent

involvement.

He says parent involvement is important in early education because parents are a child's first teacher. Equally important is the relationship between parent and teacher. They must work together to support the child's development. In fact, we all must be a support system, he said.

Dr. Austin has served on many nonprofit boards over the years. He believes Collaborative for Children “is the most respected organization in our community that influences the development of young children and their preparation for school.”

His current three-year term on the agency's board will be his last due to term limits. He says he plans to remain involved with the agency in some fashion.

“I have a passion for what the agency does and I'm committed to it,” Dr. Austin said. “Who knows what the next step may be. If I inherit a million dollars, they'll get half of it.”

Our Donors

Thanks to our patrons, we can ensure that Houston-area young children receive high-quality early childhood education. We appreciate you partnering with us to make a difference in the lives of young children.

2019 Donations

Over \$250,000

Rebuild Texas
Save the Children Federation, Inc.

\$150,000 - \$249,999

Houston Endowment Inc.
Samuels Family Foundation
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\$50,000 - \$149,000

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\$1 - \$100

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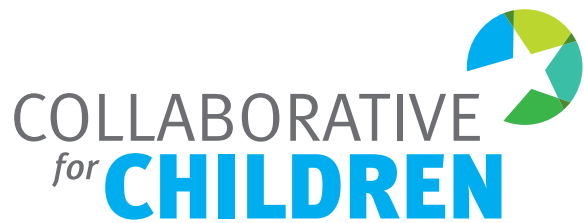
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