



March 5, 2026

# Thrive From the Start:

# Coming Together to Address Infant & Toddler Homelessness

# Agenda

- Introduction
- Opening Remarks
- Introduction to Thrive From the Start
- Infant and Child Homelessness
- Thrive From the Start Policy Agenda
- State Activities
- How to Get Involved?
- Q&A

Thrive From the Start

# Today's Panelists

Abra Lyons-Warren  
Director, *Housing Is*

Allyson Frazier  
National Senior Director, National Collaborative for  
Infants & Toddlers

Catherine Murphy  
Senior Research Manager, Prevent Child Abuse America

Corey Zimmerman  
Deputy Director and Chief Engagement and Partnerships  
Officer, The Center on the Developing Child at Harvard  
University

David Mandell, Senior Policy Advisor, ZERO TO THREE

Katrina Coburn, Senior State Policy Manager, ZERO TO  
THREE

Thomas J. Lucas (TJ)  
Senior Manager, Federal Policy, SchoolHouse Connection

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# Thrive From the Start

## Who we are:

We are a group of organizations across the early childhood, housing, and homelessness systems dedicated to ensuring all expectant parents, infants, toddlers, and their families have the resources and opportunities to thrive.

## What we believe:

We have an opportunity to ensure all infants, toddlers, expectant parents, and their families have access to stable, secure housing and the services they need to thrive.



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# Support Babies. Solve Homelessness. Together.



## The solution

There's an opportunity to ensure all infants, toddlers, expectant parents, and their families have access to stable, secure housing and the services they need to thrive.

Uniting these sectors offers comprehensive solutions to meet the unique needs of these families and unlock their full potential.

**Connected Systems**

**Everyone on the same team**

**Easy access to support**

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# How Did Thrive From the Start Get Its Start?

- *Housing Is*
- Prevent Child Abuse America
- School House Connection
- ZERO TO THREE

Came together, with support from the Pritzker Children's Initiative, to:

- Develop a shared policy agenda
- Raise awareness & recruit champions
- Plan for more sustained work

**Coming Together to Address Infant & Toddler Homelessness**



# Policy Agenda



**EXPAND ACCESS TO SHELTER  
AND PERMANENT AFFORDABLE  
HOUSING**



**INCREASE ACCESS TO EARLY  
CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS AND  
ADDITIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES**



**INTEGRATE HEALTH CARE  
SERVICES AND HOUSING  
SERVICES**



**IMPROVE DATA COLLECTION,  
ANALYSIS, USE, AND  
COORDINATION**

# Thrive From the Start Workgroups

## Steering Committee

*Housing Is*

National Collaborative for  
Infants & Toddlers

Prevent Child Abuse America

Pritzker Children's Initiative

School House Connection

ZERO TO THREE

## Federal Policy



## Communications



## Data & Research



## State Policy



# Some of the Thrive From the Start Partners



- Alliance for Early Success
- BUILD Initiative
- Center on the Developing Child
- Child Trends
- Early Childhood Policy Solutions
- Economic Security Project
- National Association of Counties
- National Conference of State Legislatures
- National League of Cities
- Niskanen Center
- PN3 Policy Impact Center
- RAPID

A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a light pink long-sleeved shirt, is shown in profile from the chest up. She is holding a baby in her arms. The baby is looking towards the camera with its hand near its mouth. The woman's hand is resting against her face, suggesting a thoughtful or concerned expression. The background is a blurred indoor setting with warm lighting. The overall tone is somber and contemplative.

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# Why Infant and Toddler Homelessness?

Coming Together to Address Infant & Toddler Homelessness

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# What the Science Says

- Environments influence development by shaping young children's experiences and exposures.
- This developmental environment is composed of the full range of experiences and exposures that young children have in the places they live, learn, play, and grow.

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# What the Science Says

- Timing matters.
- Experiences and exposures that children have during their early years are powerful in influencing children's health now, but also later in their lifetimes.
- Qualities of developmental environments are shared by and deeply rooted in public policies and social histories.

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# What the Science Says

- Housing instability affects health and development beginning prenatally and in the earliest days of life.
- When we see stable housing as a key component of children's developmental environments, we can begin to change and redesign environments to support positive development and outcomes.

**Coming Together to Address Infant & Toddler Homelessness**



# Infant and Toddler Homelessness

Approximately **450,000 infants and toddlers** experience homelessness in the U.S.

Nearly **70,000 babies** are born to parents who experience homelessness during pregnancy.

McGovern, M. E., Treglia, D., Eliason, E. L., Spishak-Thomas, A., & Cantor, J. C. (2024). Homelessness and maternal and infant health. JAMA Network Open, 7(11), e2442596. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2024.42596>

SchoolHouse Connection (2025). Infant and toddler homelessness across 50 states: 2022 – 2023. <https://schoolhouseconnection.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/2025-Infant-and-Toddler-Homelessness-Across-50-States-2022-2023.pdf>



Coming Together to Address the Issue of Homelessness

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# What the Science Says

- Safe, stable environments are the foundation for healthy births, health development and wellbeing.
- We want to reduce family stress and support them before they are in crisis.

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# What the Science Says

- Addressing and preventing infant and toddler homelessness requires both immediate support and long-term solutions.
- Together, we are calling for dedicated cross-collaboration to advance research-informed solutions.



# Policy Agenda

A young child with dark hair and eyes, wearing a purple sweater over a white collared shirt, is the central focus. The child is holding a blue ball with their right hand and looking off to the side with a curious expression. In the background, an adult is partially visible, holding a yellow star-shaped object. The setting appears to be a home with warm lighting and a window with blinds in the upper right.

Coming Together to Address Infant & Toddler  
Homelessness

# Policy Agenda



**EXPAND ACCESS TO SHELTER  
AND PERMANENT AFFORDABLE  
HOUSING**



**INCREASE ACCESS TO EARLY  
CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS AND  
ADDITIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES**



**INTEGRATE HEALTH CARE  
SERVICES AND HOUSING  
SERVICES**



**IMPROVE DATA COLLECTION,  
ANALYSIS, USE, AND  
COORDINATION**

# Housing Policies

Prioritization. Prevention.  
Connection.



Providing more resources for emergency and transitional shelters and permanent housing with **developmentally-appropriate settings and services**. This includes extending time that expectant families and those with young children can spend in emergency or transitional shelters.

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Reviewing and revising **eligibility and entry policies** to remove barriers for families with infants and toddlers.

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Increasing investments in the **supply of affordable housing** that is targeted to families with infants and toddlers, including targeted housing vouchers and other rental subsidies.

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Using **tax credits and other incentives** to increase the supply of affordable housing, and provide direct cash assistance to families to support their housing needs.

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Supporting policies and funding that incentivize **collaboration between housing agencies, early childhood development programs, and health agencies** to provide more options for support.

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Supporting policies that **prevent and respond to evictions** by connecting families and expectant parents to resources and legal services. Further, include educating landlords on the needs and supports available to these families.

# PN-3 Policies

Prioritization.  
Coordination.  
Elimination of Barriers.



Supporting greater investments in early childhood development programs that **serve families experiencing homelessness**.

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Supporting policies that **prioritize families** experiencing homelessness, **eliminate barriers** that limit access to needed services, and **improve coordination** across agencies and programs.

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Supporting **implementation of existing policy requirements** on homelessness in federal early childhood programs, including Early Head Start, child care, home visiting, and early intervention, through updated guidance and training.

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**Funding navigators and other supports** to help families access needed services.

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# Health Care Policies

Connection. Education.  
Support.



Investing in **case management services paired with shelter and housing** to help families enroll in Medicaid, obtain healthcare services, as well as other health and developmental services and supports.

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Supporting policies that ensure families have an **assigned medical home**, and provide **community-based treatment and support** services in coordination with other providers.

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Ensuring that expectant families and families with infants and toddlers are **included in presumptive eligibility definitions for Medicaid** and have continuous eligibility for services.

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Convening private health insurers to **educate and inform** them about resources to support expectant families and families with infants and toddlers experiencing housing instability.

# Data Use and Policies

Consistency.  
Comprehensiveness.  
Disaggregation.



Adopting a **common, consistent definition of homelessness** based on the definition in the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act.

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**Collecting and reporting** information for those served by HUD's homelessness assistance programs, and **disaggregate that data** by participant demographics.

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**Making available the child care agency homelessness data** from the Administration for Children & Families' Office of Child Care.

A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a light pink long-sleeved shirt, is shown in profile from the chest up. She is holding a baby in her arms. The baby is looking towards the left. The woman's hand is resting against her face, suggesting a thoughtful or concerned expression. The background is a blurred indoor setting, possibly a home or a childcare center, with a wooden shelf and some plants visible.

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# state Activities

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# Thrive from the Start - State Capacity-Building Initiative

- RFP released in September 2025
- More than 40 states applied
- 10 Awards of \$100,000 each
- Timeline: January 2026 – June 2027

[Press release](#) and [RFP](#)

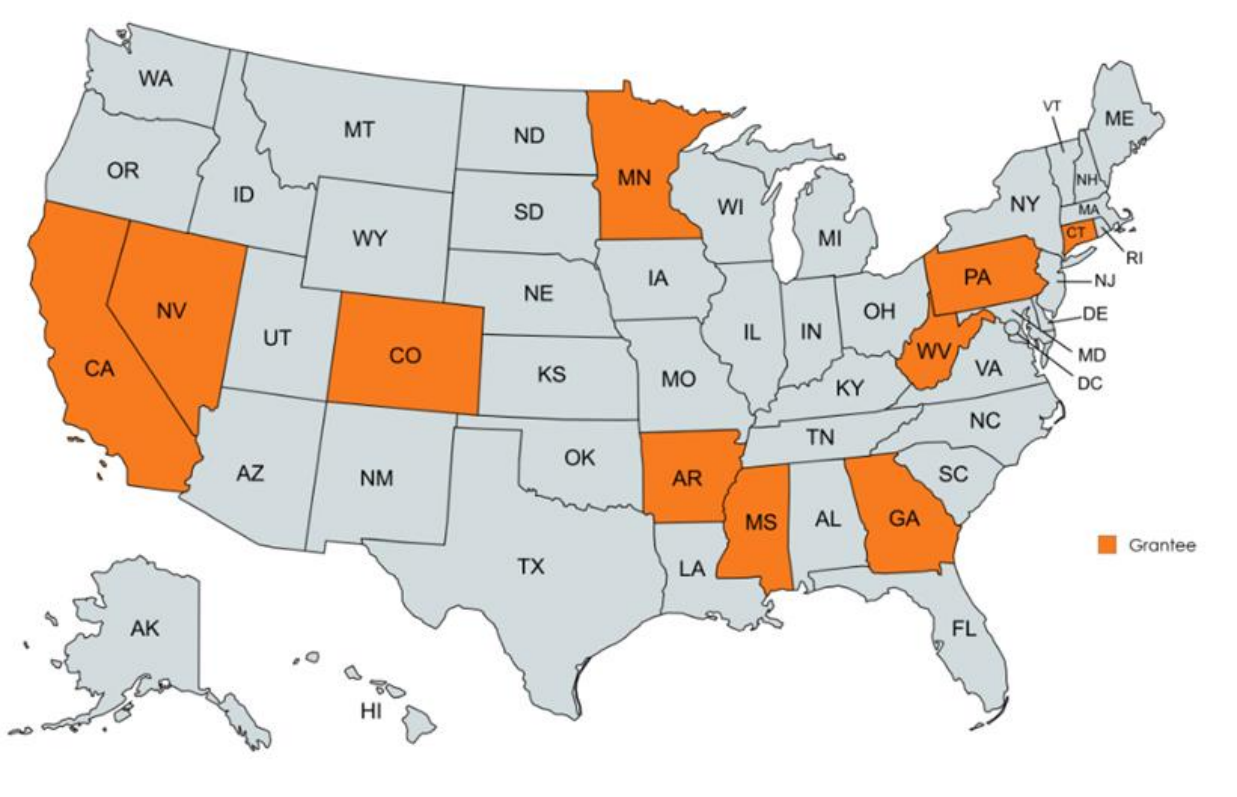


# Capacity-Building Activities

- Bimonthly community of practice
- In-Person Convening
- Individualized TA Supports



# Thrive From the Start State Grantees



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# How Funded and Non-Funded States Differed

- Not a vast difference in what their needs are
- Strengths that set funded-states apart
  - Team readiness and engagement
  - Depth of approaches to engaging families with lived experience (and funding to support them)
  - Whole child and cross-sector approach



# Themes from State Selection Process – TA Needs

- Learning from – and with - other states
- Tactics, messaging, building bi-partisan support
- Strengthening data collection, analysis and using data in advocacy
- Support with policy development, model legislation, policy implementation
- Coalition-building
- Landscape analysis
- Federal policy navigation and state-fed connections
- Partnership with families and direct service staff

A young child with dark hair and eyes, wearing a purple long-sleeved shirt, is holding a blue ball. The child is looking towards the camera with a neutral expression. In the background, an adult is sitting and holding a yellow star-shaped object. The scene is indoors, likely a home, with warm lighting and a window in the background showing some greenery.

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# How to Get Involved

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# What Does it Mean to Be A Champion?

Champions agree that all infants, toddlers, expectant parents, and their families should have access to stable, secure housing and the services they need. Only when no child or family is experiencing homelessness or housing instability will we have reached our goal.

- Leader in driving change for the youngest children and their families
- Align their organization with a national movement to use effective policy
- Gain tools, training, and collaborative opportunities to influence policy, amplify your impact, and connect with other champions

# Growing the Network of Thrive From the Start Champions

## Champions can:

- Raise awareness of the issue
- Lend their name to TFTS
- Push for policy changes
- Participate in a workgroup
- Identify additional ways to support TFTS

## Champions:

- Are part of a community
- Have access to tools, training and collaborative opportunities
- Receive the TFTS newsletter

# HOW TO GET INVOLVED?



About

Network  
Members

Join Us as a  
Champion

Stay  
Informed

Resources

Join our Work  
Groups

## Join Us as a Champion

When families have safe, stable housing, safe shelter when they need it, access to high-quality early childhood development programs, and other supports that meet their needs, young children have a strong foundation to grow.



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# Thrive From the Start Working Groups

## Federal Policy



## Communications



## Data & Research



## State Policy



The Federal Policy Working Group elevates federal policy through national coalition building and coordinated advocacy, and the TFTS policy agenda by coordinating advocacy, sharing data and resources, and informing federal policy.

The Communications Working Group works to advance awareness through critical comms functions such as disseminating best practices and case studies, providing tools to promote policies, and strategizing about products and PR.

The Research & Data Work Group shares knowledge and lessons learned to advance what works and build a more supportive system for families by creating materials that summarize action, direct consultation to and training for state grantees and partner with parent leaders with lived experience.

The State Capacity Building Support Work Group develops and implements a set of activities/resources to increase states' capacity to identify and advance policy/system priorities and serve as a space for coordinating activities related to this goal across national partners.

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# Questions & Answers



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From  
the **Start**

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# Thank You

All slides, links and resources will be up  
on the Thrive From the Start website:

<https://thrivefromthestart.org/>

Please take a moment to sign up for our  
newsletter!

