

2013



June

NCECF FORMAL INCORPORATION

North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation (NCECF) was founded as the state's only organization focused exclusively on the health and well-being of children from birth through age eight. The idea for a new organization originated, at the North Carolina Partnership for Children, around the need to create a continuum for children, starting at birth through third grade, to be given a strong foundation for life-long health, education, and well-being. It was recognized that the strategic opportunity for success was a combination of expertise in early childhood education and community and state partner engagement to build champions for actionable change. Bridging the gulf between two systems, birth through age five and kindergarten through third grade, was and has remained the focus to be responsive to the needs of young children, their families, and the people and systems who serve them.

NCECF was established to convene, facilitate, analyze and synthesize policy, and communicate the urgency of increased and sustained investments in young children. Soon thereafter, our three core strategies were devised and deployed: promote understanding, spearhead collaboration, and advance policy.

In 2012, the Founding Board was constituted:

- Dr. Olson Huff, Chair
- Susan Gale Perry, Vice-Chair
- Dr. Susan Catapano, Treasurer
- Jamaica Pfister, Secretary

The 501(c)(3) status was granted in June 2013, with an effective date of June 2011. The Board of Directors was established and bylaws were adopted in October 2012 and they then hired the first Executive Director and staff in 2013.

First 2000 Days Launched

Two years before formal incorporation of NCECF, the **First 2000 Days** campaign was launched to build bipartisan support for investments in a child's early years. By positioning early childhood education as an imperative to a thriving economy, NCECF reached businesses, faith leaders and law enforcement. A toolkit was developed for NC communities to lead local **First 2000 Days** campaigns.

[Read More →](#)



2014



January

BLUE RIBBON PANEL CONVENED

A Blue Ribbon Panel of distinguished business, philanthropic, and civic leaders met to offer advice into the organization's core principles and strategies and recommend other influential leaders to champion our goals.

[Read More](#) →



Blue Ribbon Panel, January 2014

August

NC Voters Polled

In partnership with the First Five Years Fund, an NCECF poll showed that 74% of North Carolina registered voters supported expanded investments in the state's signature early childhood programs, NC Pre-K and Smart Start communities from an initial three to thirteen.

[Read More](#) →

January

Organizational Branding and Communications Revealed

NCECF's website officially went live at the beginning of the year under www.buildthefoundation.org. Our first newsletter was published shortly thereafter.

March

NCECF Expertise Recognized

NCECF Executive Director Susan Gale Perry was elected to the Governing Board of the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the NC Institute of Medicine's Essentials for Childhood Task Force.

[Read More](#) →



First 2000 Days Reaches Across NC

Nine hundred faith leaders attend faith summits in Burlington, Fayetteville, Greenville, Rutherfordton, Eden, and Wilmington. Twelve business briefings across the state engaged 500 business leaders in becoming First 2000 Days champions.

[Read More](#) →

The First 2000 Days initiative has been a galvanizing force for the Partnership. A North Carolina House of Representative member, who attended the initiative's launch, has been a very outspoken advocate in his community presentations for the importance of the early years.

Shelia Orth • Executive Director, Martin- Pitt Partnership for Children

2015



Legislative breakfast

November

PATHWAYS TO GRADE-LEVEL READING KICK-OFF

In partnership with NC Child, The North Carolina Partnership for Children, and excelleNCe, NCECF launched **NC Pathways to Grade-Level Reading**, the ongoing effort to inform and support whole-child, birth-to-eight pathways to grade-level reading success. More than 85 government, legislative, foundation, nonprofit, business, and community leaders attended the kick-off event.

[Read More](#) →

March

Legislative Breakfast Convened

NCECF, in partnership with BEST NC, hosted a legislative breakfast for more than 60 NC General Assembly members and stakeholders, providing research-based information about birth-to-eight strategies, emphasizing the importance of grade-level reading, and highlighting concepts in child development that are key to guiding policy.

[Read More](#) →

April

NCECF Named Lead of NC Campaign for Grade-Level Reading

The national Campaign for Grade-Level Reading named NCECF as state lead of the **North Carolina Campaign for Grade-Level Reading**. The state lead supports local campaigns' efforts to improve third grade reading outcomes. To date, we have increased the number of NC Campaign communities from an initial three to thirteen.

[Read More](#) →

Supporting Our Partners

NCECF supported numerous early childhood-focused professional development opportunities, including workshops at the NC Association for the Education of Young Children, Smart Start, and T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood conferences, Prevent Child Abuse NC's Prevention Advocacy Network, and the Early Childhood Directors Leadership Institute.

2016



April

LOCAL FINANCING FOR EARLY LEARNING TOOLKIT PUBLISHED

The first of its kind in the nation, NCECF created tools for NC communities to pursue local investments in early childhood. Partnering with the NC Budget and Tax Center and national experts, the organizations trained 78 stakeholders, in six counties, all of whom have successfully secured local investments for early childhood education.

[Read More](#) →

If your community is considering locally expanding early care and education services, the toolkit and workshop supplied by NCECF and the Budget and Tax Center is essential to your planning.

Jennie Eblen • Co-Chair, Asheville Buncombe Preschool Planning Collaborative

"Local Funding for Early Learning: A Community Toolkit" is fabulous! Very comprehensive. Very easy to use. Really nice job. Kudos!

Louise Stony • Alliance for Early Childhood Finance Opportunities Exchange

September

Facilitated Advancing Early Learning Through Every Student Succeeds Act

NCECF began collaborating with NC's Office of Early Learning at the Department of Public Instruction to identify birth-to-eight strategies to be included in North Carolina's Every Student Succeeds Act.

[Read More](#) →

February

Finalized Pathways to Grade-Level Reading's Measures of Success Framework

Thirty experts came to consensus around 11 opportunities that all children should have while growing up, such as all children should live in families that are economically secure; have access to health care; live in safe, toxic-free, economically viable communities; and more.

[Read More](#) →



August

First 2000 Days Licenses Offered Out-of-State

NCECF obtained the First 2000 Days trademark and began licensing its toolkit to out-of-state organizations and conducted accompanying workshops. The Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students, and the University of Mississippi purchased licensing agreements.

[Read More](#) →

2017



January

Partners Learn about Pathways to Grade-Level Reading initiative

NCECF led a workshop at the Triangle Community Foundation's (TCF) annual "What Matters" Community Luncheon. Partnering with TCF, the United Way of the Greater Triangle, and the National Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, corporate, civic, philanthropic, academic, religious, and non-profit leaders came together and learned about the **Pathways to Grade-Level Reading** initiative and how to support children's reading proficiency.

[Read More](#) →



October

PATHWAYS MEASURES OF SUCCESS FRAMEWORK RELEASED

NCECF released the **NC Pathways to Grade-Level Reading** report, *Shared Measures of Success to Put North Carolina's Children on a Pathway to Grade-Level Reading*, containing the Measures of Success Framework developed by the Pathways Data Action Team, naming the three goals of: Health and Development on Track Beginning at Birth, Supported and Supportive Families and Communities, and High Quality Birth-to-Eight Learning Environments with Regular Attendance.

[Read More](#) →

January

Interagency Councils Form and Collaborate

The NC General Assembly formed the Birth through Third Grade Interagency Council to create a vision for a birth through third grade early education system. The **Pathways to Grade-Level Reading** Measures of Success Framework informed the legislation, with NCECF appointed to the Council. Collaborative planning among this Council, the Child Well-being Transformation Council, and the NC Early Childhood Advisory Council began.

[Read More](#) →

June

"Best Awareness Campaign" Awarded to First 2000 Days

NCECF's **First 2000 Days** received the 2017 Best Awareness Campaign award at the National Campaign for Grade-Level Reading conference. A well-known outreach campaign and toolkit, **First 2000 Days** has reached and been accessed by numerous NC communities, championing early learning.

[Read More](#) →

December

Family Forward NC Initiative Incubated

To inform the **Family Forward NC** initiative, over 300 NC employers were interviewed and over 300 NC employees were surveyed about family-friendly workplace policies, confirming that these policies are good for both businesses and families. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of NC became the founding sponsor.

[Read More](#) →

2018



February

KidoNomiCs FORUM HOSTS FAMILY FORWARD NC LAUNCH

At North Carolina State University's Institute for Emerging Issues Forum, the research basis for family friendly workplace policies was released and employers affirmed the importance of family friendly workplace policies, setting **Family Forward NC** in motion. The report was commissioned by NCECF and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina. It confirmed that employers and employees see themselves as being on the same team regarding the need for family-friendly practices. Both state that family-friendly practices are a legitimate way to grow a more prosperous company, which adds stability and opportunity to both the employer and employee.

[Read More](#) →



Sepi Saidi, President and CEO of SEPI Engineering and Construction, speaks on family friendly practices in the workplace

September

Voters Continue to Support Early Childhood Investments

NCECF partnered with Public Opinion Strategies, and Hart Research to continue its multi-year analysis of NC voters' priorities about children. Across all party lines, the poll showed support for expanded investments in the state's signature early childhood programs, NC Pre-K and Smart Start grew from 74 percent in 2014 to 86 percent in 2018.

[Read More](#) →

February

NCECF Convenes Attendance Summit

NC Campaign for Grade-Level Reading community leaders and the Pathways to Grade-Level Reading Regular School Attendance Design Team came together to strategize how to tackle chronic absence in NC. The session featured Hedy Chang, [Attendance Works](#) Executive Director.

[Read More](#) →

May

First Summer Learning Toolkit Published

Working with parents at Book Harvest, NCECF created messaging and resources to publish the first NC Summer Learning Toolkit, in both English and Spanish. The toolkit provided program providers with a range of materials, from talking points, text messages, and social media posts to share the importance of supporting children learning all summer with their families.

[Read More](#) →

May

Pathways-to-Grade-Level Reading Introduced Nationally

NCECF staff debuted the **Pathways to Grade-Level Reading** process, products, and plans at the National Smart Start Pre-Conference Session.

[Read More](#) →

August

"What Works" Research Series Released

NCECF staff published a 12-part blog research series, "What Works." Released between 2017 and 2018, the series covered topics that influence children's health and development, like high-quality care and education and social-emotional health supports.

[Read More](#) →

November

NC Institute of Medicine Partnership Begins

NCECF began a five-year partnership with the NC Institute of Medicine (NCIOM). With support from the CDC, NCIOM's initiative, Essentials for Early Childhood: Strengthening Economic Supports for Families, helps further the work of **Family Forward NC**.

[Read More](#) →

2019



April

GUIDE TO FAMILY FORWARD WORKPLACES PUBLISHED

The groundbreaking *Guide to Family Forward Workplaces* was released at a Summit with 140 employers gathering at RTI International to take action within their own workplace to enact more family-friendly policies.

[Read More](#) →



Family Forward NC Summit

I really enjoyed and appreciated the presentation. Your resources would be extremely helpful to the manufacturing companies we interact with and the tourism/hospitality industry employers, would also benefit.

Chris Chung • CEO, Economic Development Partnership of NC

May

NCECF Staff and Work Grew Exponentially

As a growing organization, NCECF hired a new Executive Director and expanded staff positions as the reach of the organization's initiative experienced significant growth.

[Read More](#) →



Muffy Grant, Executive Director, NCECF

August

AttendaNCe Toolkit Produced in Support for NC Communities

As part of the NC Campaign for Grade-Level Reading focus on attendance and recognition of its impact on well-being through the Pathways to Grade-Level Reading initiative, the AttendaNCe Toolkit was released.

October

Economic Development Linked to Family Forward Workplaces

At its fall conference in Asheville, 300 members of the NC Economic Development Association are introduced to Family Forward NC.

2020



December

SURVEY REVEALED FINANCIAL LOSS DUE TO LACK OF CHILD CARE, INSPIRING CARE AND LEARNING (CANDL)

NCECF released results from the state's first survey on how families are navigating child care and work before and during COVID-19. Data revealed that before the pandemic, NC families, businesses and the economy were already losing \$2.4 billion annually due to insufficient affordable, high-quality child care and during the pandemic annual losses were approaching \$2.9 billion a year—and climbing. Rooted in the insights from this report, **CandL** was established as a long term campaign to move NC towards sustained public investment in an equitable mixed delivery early childhood system.

[Read More](#) →

NC Campaign for Grade-Level Reading (CGLR) Communities Honored Nationally

Four NC Campaign for Grade-Level Reading communities were recognized, by the national CGLR, for their work to ensure more children from under-resourced communities are reading on grade-level by the end of third grade.

[Read More](#) →

June

Pathways Data Dashboard Debuted

As part of the **Pathways to Grade-Level Reading** initiative, the Pathways Data Dashboard was released publicly in June 2020 to help advocates, lawmakers, and partners identify areas of need to focus on.

[Read More](#) →

August

Early Childhood Mental Health Focus Formed Under EarlyWell

In partnership with NC Child, an implementation of Pathways to focus on mental health in early childhood was created and called **EarlyWell**. As the initiative grew over the next year, it expanded to 12 working groups, released a report, and continued to emphasize the importance of building strong and resilient families.

[Read More](#) →

NCECF has been incredibly helpful in providing us with the tools we need to clearly define our goals and work together to help our children succeed. The NC Pathways project is a perfect alignment with the NC Campaign for Grade-Level Reading and the team at NCECF has worked so hard to assist us in achieving our goals in Chatham County.

Jaime Detzi • Executive Director, Chatham Education Foundation

2021



February

CANDL COALITION FORMALLY ESTABLISHED

The Care and Learning Coalition (CandL) debuted under coordinating leadership from NC Child, Black Child Development Institute-Charlotte, and NC Early Childhood Foundation, with the long term goal of establishing a publicly funded mixed delivery early care and education system in North Carolina. In addition to being a coordinating leadership organization, NCECF led the communications work and assumed the role of fiscal sponsor.

[Read More](#) →



August

Economic Development Plan Recognizes Family Forward NC

The NC Department of Commerce released the state's Strategic Economic Development Plan. The plan called for more investments in early childhood education and family strengthening initiatives, noting **Family Forward NC**, to foster productive work environments; promote talent development; enhance business growth; and support working families.

[Read More](#) →



April

New EarlyWell Report Emphasized Need to Strengthen Early Childhood Services

In collaboration with NC Child, the EarlyWell initiative released the *Lean In and Listen Up* report providing a comprehensive look into the experiences and needs of parents and caregivers of young children, who have interacted with the state's social-emotional health system.

[Read More](#) →

July

Playbook for Family Forward Workplaces Published

How to Build a Family Forward Community is published as a playbook for out-of-state licensing of **Family Forward NC** resources. Licensed materials are customizable and adaptable. Licenses have been sold to organizations in Minnesota, Montana, Florida, Colorado and Kansas.

[Read More](#) →

October

Family Forward Employer Certification Advisors Convened

The **Family Forward NC** Advisory Council of prominent North Carolina business and community representatives and health experts are convened to review and support the Family Forward NC Employer Certification program.

[Read More](#) →

2022



April

FIRST EDITION OF PATHWAYS ACTION MAP RELEASED

The Pathways Action Map interactive tool highlights what is happening across the state to improve third grade reading proficiency using a whole child, birth-to-eight approach to literacy and child well-being and is organized by four expectations outlined in the Pathways Action Framework. The first release included 18 initiatives focused on Expectation 4: NC's social-emotional health system is accessible and high-quality.

[Read More](#) →



June

EarlyWell Policy and Practice Recommendations Released

In collaboration with NC Child, the EarlyWell initiative released the report, *From Equity to Issue Campaigns: The Next Step on the Road Map to Childhood Mental Health in North Carolina*, including 30 Policy & Practice recommendations to support young children's mental health.

[Read More](#) →

July

Business Counselors Trained in Family Forward Workplace Policies

At a statewide Town Hall, the NC Dept of Commerce announced **Family Forward NC** training sessions for business counselors. NCECF trained 186 business counselors from the Small Business Technology Development Partnership of NC, Economic Development Partnership of NC and the North Carolina Small Business Center Network

[Read More](#) →

September

Employers Now Certified by Family Forward NC

The Family Forward NC Employer Certification officially launched. Since then, 36 employers have been certified, representing more than 6,200 employees across NC.

[Read More](#) →



November

Child Care & Economic Recovery Report Released

After coordinating a statewide survey on how families were navigating child care and work before and during COVID-19, NCECF released a report concluding that 400,000 working parents across the state were assumed to be constrained by childcare needs and continued economic recovery from the pandemic would require sustained attention to child care affordability and availability.

[Read More](#) →

2023



Book Harvest Block Party

September

PATHWAYS TO GRADE-LEVEL READING POLICY AND PRACTICE ACTION TOOLKIT RELEASED

To provide guidance for how policymakers, advocates, community non-profits, the business community, and other stakeholders can support the well-being of all NC children, NCECF released the first policy briefs for the following Pathways actions: Support Families in Advocating for their Children, Require Linked Strategies Across Programs to Engage and Learn from Families, Ensure Assessment Instruments are Culturally and Linguistically Relevant, Provide Professional Development for Teachers on Cultural Competency/Working with Families, Ensure Education Accountability Systems are Culturally Relevant, and Support Schools and Child Care Programs to Engage Deeply with Families.

[Read More](#) →

July

Community Grade-Level Reading Campaigns Convened to Advance Equity

At the NC Campaign for Grade-Level Reading Annual Meeting, communities worked on strategic planning to build capacity in their collaboratives through a racial equity lens with Jovonia Lewis, founder of Empowered Parents in Community (EPiC) in Durham.

[Read More](#) →

August

Family Forward NC Employers Led by Example with Case Studies

Family Forward NC published its 39th case study spotlighting employers across NC providing family supports to their employees.

[Read More](#) →

September

Science of Reading Educator Fellowship Initiated

In response to challenges reported about implementing the principles of the Science of Reading, NCECF launched a fellowship to create an opportunity for collaborative learning and professional development. The lessons learned and insight gathered from this initiative will be shared with NC educators across the state.

[Read More](#) →

Family Forward NC Recognized Nationally in US Agency Guide

Reports by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the International Economic Development Council recognized **Family Forward NC** as an initiative to support the health and well-being of families and reduce barriers to work. The International Economic Development Council interviewed **Family Forward NC** for their new report—*Growing Your Workforce: Strategies to Raise Local Labor Force Participation*—about how economic development professionals can reduce barriers to work. DHHS' report subsequently issued *Doing Things Differently: Moving from the Challenge to the Change's Prevention and Resource Guide*.