



SUCCESS BY 6
AUSTIN/TRAVIS COALITION

TOGETHER WITH



United Way for
Greater Austin

SUCCESS BY 6

A 2,000-DAY JOURNEY



Strategic Plan 2024-2029

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LETTER FROM BARBARA GRANT BONETA, DIRECTOR OF AUSTIN/TRAVIS COUNTY SUCCESS BY 6 COALITION

Dear friends,

The Austin/Travis Success By 6 Coalition (SX6) is proud to present our new strategic plan, dedicated to fostering a brighter future for the youngest members of our community. Recognizing the critical importance of early childhood development, this plan is rooted in the belief that every young child and family deserves the opportunity to thrive.

Early childhood is a period of remarkable growth and potential, where foundational skills for lifelong learning and well-being are established. By investing in the earliest years, we set the stage for success in school, work, and life. Research consistently shows that quality early childhood experiences lead to better educational outcomes, higher earnings, improved health, and stronger communities.

At the heart of our strategic plan is a commitment to centering equity. We acknowledge that systemic barriers and disparities have historically marginalized many children and families in our community. Our approach is designed to ensure that all children, regardless of their background, have access to the resources, support, and opportunities they need to succeed. By prioritizing equity, we strive to create a more inclusive and just community where every child can reach their full potential.

This strategic plan outlines our goals, strategies, and initiatives for the coming years. It represents a collaborative effort, bringing together diverse stakeholders, including families, educators, community organizations, and policymakers, to create a comprehensive and impactful approach to early childhood development.



Together, we can build a future where every child in Austin and Travis County enters kindergarten ready to succeed, and where every family has the support they need to nurture their children’s growth and development. We invite you to join us in this vital mission, as we work together to ensure that every child has the opportunity to succeed by 6.

With gratitude,
Barbara Grant Boneta

OUR VALUES

Success By 6:

- Believes all children and families have inherent worth and an immense capacity to learn and thrive,
- Values diversity and strives for equity in everything we do,
- Honors the primary and vital relationship between parents/caregivers, families, and their children,
- And agrees early childhood professionals should be provided with respectable working conditions and a living wage for their important work.

OUR BEGINNINGS

In 2012, a coalition of child and family advocates – providers, parents, policymakers, civic leaders, and experts – came together under the banner of United Way for Greater Austin to transform Austin/Travis County’s early childhood system through a strategic plan, originally called the School Readiness Action Plan. Today, our Austin/Travis County SX6 Coalition has grown, strengthened, and continues to build upon its achievements. This fourth installment of the strategic plan looks forward to our next 2,000 days and how we can continue to coordinate our actions to help ensure every child born in the Austin area receives the support and care they deserve during their essential 2,000 days.

OUR VISION

The SX6 Coalition envisions the Austin/Travis County public and private sectors working together to ensure that our children’s first 2,000-day journey becomes and remains a top priority for our community. By the time our children complete this foundational journey, they will possess the physical, cognitive, social-emotional, and language skills necessary for them to thrive in a classroom environment – and beyond.

WHY A 2,000-DAY JOURNEY?

Research has proven that the first five years of a child’s life significantly shape their future. Ninety percent of brain development happens within those first 2,000 days, or roughly five years, from birth to Kindergarten. It is crucial to ensure that all children, regardless of their background, have access to rich early childhood experiences so that they can be happy, healthy, and ready to succeed in school and in life.

THE OPPORTUNITY GAP

- Children from families with low income who attend pre-K are more than twice as likely to be school-ready, but only 16% of eligible 3-year-olds are served by pre-K3.
Source: E3 Alliance
- 1 in 3 children live in a very low or low opportunity neighborhood.
- Low opportunity neighborhoods are based on economic and demographic factors such as income level, educational opportunities, health environment, concentrated inequity, and more.
Source: United Way for Greater Austin and Diversity Data Kids
- Black infants are about twice as likely as white infants to die during their first year of life.
Source: National Center for Health Statistics, period linked birth/infant death data
- 90% of children living in poverty are children of color.
Source: 2022 American Community Survey; 5 year data; B17001

WHAT WE KNOW

Children thrive when they are able to learn through caring and joyful relationships with the adults in their lives.

SX6 creates opportunities for infants, toddlers, and young children impacted by poverty, especially those who identify as BIPOC, to receive high-quality education before they enter Kindergarten, while also fostering a community of parents, caregivers, and teachers ready to provide high-quality care. Our alliance creates a future in which all children enter Kindergarten healthy, happy, and ready to succeed in school and life.

SX6 is dedicated to bridging the opportunity gap with a community-wide plan, ensuring all Austin children, families, and communities have access to the resources and support they need and deserve to thrive. Addressing the opportunity gap involves creating equitable access to essential resources and support systems, ensuring that all children, regardless of their background, have the chance to thrive and reach their full potential.



WHAT DOES “READY” REALLY MEAN?

A child who has completed their first 2,000-day journey and is happy, healthy, and ready to succeed in school and in life has the foundational experiences to ensure they’re ready to learn – they have physical well-being, social-emotional skills, at-level knowledge, and an optimistic attitude.

What does that look like?

A school-ready child:

- Interacts positively with others;
- Is curious and loves learning;
- Can focus and pay attention;
- Is generally happy and can manage their emotions; and
- Has age-appropriate thinking, language, and physical skills.

FROM 2019-2023, MORE THAN 10,000 CHILDREN RECEIVED ACCESS TO ESSENTIAL SUPPORT IN THEIR FIRST 5 YEARS OF LIFE OTHERWISE NOT AVAILABLE TO THEM THANKS TO SX6 PROGRAMS.

PLAN GOALS & FRAMEWORK

To achieve our goal that each child is happy, healthy, and ready to succeed in school and life at the end of their first 2,000-day journey, our coalition uses a four-pillar framework that outlines our current objectives related to each foundational pillar for children and their families, as well as for the program itself and associated public policy.

- Healthy beginnings
- Supported families
- High-quality care and education
- Safe and stimulating communities



OUR STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

GROUNDING IN RACIAL EQUITY

At the beginning of the process to write our next strategic plan, we established that it would be designed and implemented through a lens of racial equity that centered the voices of the families in our community.

We recognized that a universal vision for children would be incomplete without a plan to address the racial disparities that persist. Each pillar includes a universal goal statement for all families living in poverty followed by a focus data point, which demonstrates that a particular group merits special attention due to historic and disproportionately negative impact.

WHEN WE DESIGN OUR EFFORTS TO ADDRESS THE GREATEST AREAS OF INEQUITY, WE WILL GET TO OUR OVERALL VISION QUICKER.

HEALTHY BEGINNINGS

TODAY IN AUSTIN/ TRAVIS COUNTY

- About 1 in 15 infants (6.6% of live births) was born to a woman receiving late or no prenatal care in Travis. *Source: National Center for Health Statistics, final natality data*
- The rate of late or no prenatal care among births to Black women (8.6%) was about 2 times higher than the rate among white women (2.7%). *Source: National Center for Health Statistics, final natality data*
- Black infants (14.2%) were about 2 times as likely as White infants (7.9%) to be born preterm. *Source: National Center for Health Statistics, final natality data*
- Black infants (7.1%) were about 2 times as likely as white infants (3.1%) to die during the first year of life. *Source: National Center for Health Statistics, period linked birth/infant death data*






SX6 Universal Goal: Families feel empowered and have guidance to navigate the medical and mental health systems successfully, and have the resources they need to thrive before, during, and after birth and through the child's first year of life.

SX6 Targeted Goal: Families, especially Black families, families impacted by poverty, and families who possess complex documentation statuses, feel empowered and have guidance to navigate a just medical and mental health system successfully. Additionally, birthing parents have the resources needed for their well-being, and resources to ensure that their infants achieve developmental milestones from prenatal through age one.

“When we support a family in getting their needs met perinatally, we take one step closer to advancing respectful and evidence-based maternity care, paid parental leave, and affordable child care for all.”

Morgan Miles, Executive Director, Giving Austin Labor Support (GALS)

STRATEGIES

-  Conduct targeted outreach to child health care providers through office-based education, training, and/or workshops on effective developmental screenings and observations to increase the number of screened and successful referral to necessary early childhood services for infants, toddlers, and families who are impacted by poverty.
-  Build new and strengthen existing relationships between healthcare systems and early childhood providers.
-  Ensure families have access to culturally affirming and evidence-based prenatal and postnatal care by trusted providers, inclusive of doulas and midwives, in any setting the birthing parent chooses.
-  Eliminate disparities in birth outcomes and increase cultural humility by strengthening and supporting organizations involved in perinatal health.
-  Identify and engage with the support system of fathers, partners, family members, health care providers, and communities committed to the health and well-being of our children.

SUPPORTED FAMILIES

TODAY IN AUSTIN/ TRAVIS COUNTY

- Only around 2,000 eligible children 0-3 receive research- and evidence-based home visiting or parent-education services. *Source: United Way for Greater Austin, 2023 data from partner agencies*
- Child welfare data in Travis County reports inequities, with African American children 4.8 times more likely to be reported, 5.6 times more likely to be investigated, and 6.1 times more likely to be removed than White children. *Source: Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Rider 33 Disproportionality and Disparity Analysis, 2024*
- 1,018 children under the age of 6 are confirmed victims of child abuse and neglect. *Source: Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, 2023*

SX6 Universal Goal: Families have access to age-appropriate resources to maintain and build on nurturing responsive parent-child relationships while navigating the journey of raising children from birth through age 5.

SX6 Targeted Goal: Families impacted by poverty, especially those who identify as BIPOC and families with home languages other than English, have access to the culturally affirming resources that maintain and build on nurturing responsive parent-child relationships while navigating the journey of raising children from birth through age 5.

“A society that invests in its children is a society that believes in its own future. By investing in children’s development, nurturing their natural abilities, and ensuring that families have the resources they need, we ensure a brighter future for everyone.”

Christina Fernandez Collazo, Executive Director and Founder, Todos Juntos Learning Center

STRATEGIES

-  Strengthen referral pathways for parents and caregivers to meet their most basic needs, including stable housing, sufficient income, nutritionally rich and healthy food, reliable transportation, safe neighborhoods, and mental health.
-  Increase parent and caregiver access to positive, culturally affirming, and trauma-informed parenting education supports, available locally and in their home language, which enables developmentally appropriate parenting practices.
-  Grow and support existing family care programs, including existing home visiting programs, in languages other than English.
-  Ensure that parents/caregivers and young children have at least 20 early childhood books in their homes.

Profile:

WENDY AND OLIVIA

Seven years ago, Wendy risked everything to move to the United States in search of a better life.

When Wendy had a baby girl named Olivia, she was determined not to let the distance from her family or the isolation of COVID-19 impact her baby's healthy development.

United Way referred Wendy to one of our partners, Travis County's Healthy Families program.

Wendy struggled to breastfeed and felt overwhelmed ensuring her newborn gained enough weight. Through the Healthy Families program, Wendy received the support of a home visitor, which helped her find a balance between taking care of Olivia and managing her own physical and mental health as a single mother.

Eager to soak up all the parenting knowledge she could, Wendy also received referrals to various child literacy and parenting programs, such as Any Baby Can, Todos Juntos, and Partners in Parenting.

AN UNEXPECTED DIAGNOSIS

United Way's referral network opened an incredible support network of peer mothers for Wendy. They were instrumental during some of her toughest challenges, such as when

Olivia began to have tantrums and struggled to communicate. Olivia was soon diagnosed with selective mutism, an anxiety disorder in which she was unable to speak in certain situations.

United Way referred Wendy to speech and occupational therapies that helped Olivia and supported Wendy in managing her daughter's feelings and accepting her developmental challenges.

By the time Olivia turned 2, she was making significant progress. Thanks to her support network, Wendy learned to manage Olivia's tantrums and social interactions.



FINDING HER VOICE

When Olivia started school, her speech and social skills improved remarkably. Olivia thrived in Pre-Kindergarten, connecting well with her teachers and peers.

Looking back at her first days, weeks, and months, Wendy recognized the support she received was crucial – for Olivia and for herself. She bonded with other mothers over their shared cultural background and language, feeling understood and supported.

COMING FULL CIRCLE

Wendy felt compelled to become a leader for the same organizations from which she

had received support. Sharing resources and fostering support networks for new mothers became her way of giving back, helping other mothers navigate the complexities of parenting in a new country.

BUILDING BLOCKS FOR A BRIGHT FUTURE

Today, Olivia is a bright, thriving 3-year-old. Our supportive referral network provided a safety net for Wendy and Olivia, helping them flourish. Through Wendy's determination, Olivia gained not just a strong voice, but a path for healthy development.



QUALITY CARE AND EDUCATION

TODAY IN AUSTIN/ TRAVIS COUNTY

- The average cost of infant care is \$13,595 annually – over \$2,700 more than the annual cost of tuition at the University of Texas.

Source: 2024 Texas Child Care Market Rate Survey; UT website

- Only 56% of programs serving children from households with low income are high quality.

Source: Workforce Solutions and United Way for Greater Austin

- Only 16% of eligible three year olds are served by Pre-K3, and children from families with low income who attend Pre-K are more than twice as likely to be school-ready.

Source: E3 Alliance

SX6 Universal Goal: Families have access to affordable, high-quality, equitable early care and education from birth to age 6.

SX6 Targeted Goal: Families impacted by poverty, especially those who identify as BIPOC and families with home languages other than English, and children who have exceptional needs have the opportunity to experience high-quality equitable early care and education from birth to age 6.

“High-quality child care is the planting of a seed in our nation’s garden where our children grow.”

**Tamitha Blackmon, Founder/
Owner, Nehemiah Christian School**

STRATEGIES



Increase the availability of high-quality, affordable center and home-based infant and toddler care, especially in communities that lack access to child care and during the hours needed by parents.



Recruit, develop and retain a highly qualified early childhood workforce.



Increase the capability of child care programs to support children with exceptional needs.



Secure additional sustainable funding sources for high-quality, affordable early care and education.



Increase the number of eligible 3 and 4-year-old children enrolled in public pre-K in Travis County school districts and other high-quality early education settings.



Every district has and implements a plan to increase public pre-K quality and sociocultural equity, utilizing student data analysis to inform teacher professional development and district decisions regarding pre-K supports, specifically for children of color.



Maintain quality ratings for child care providers in Travis County.

Spotlight: QUALITY CARE AND EDUCATION BUILDING THRIVING FUTURES THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

When Cristina Romero Hernandez moved to the US, she spoke Spanish only. Determined to make a difference and build community, she quickly signed up for English classes. She also registered at Austin Community College to study child development and small business.

Despite not having much experience in child care, Cristina soon bought a child care center. Her background in administration and finance were instrumental in rebuilding the center, which had been struggling. She earned her Child Development Associate certificate and Child Development Science degree, helping her gain vital knowledge about our child care infrastructure.

“I like to know the ‘why’ behind every challenge I undertake – I won’t do anything without knowing the why. I can’t lead others if I don’t understand it myself,” Cristina said.

With her purpose defined and with newfound knowledge of child development practices, the child care center took off. Cristina understood the needs of local families and soon took over a second center.

Becoming a part of United Way’s Pre-K Partnerships has benefited her business greatly, she said. Professional development supports from the partnership have built a child care workforce infrastructure in which teachers from the first day care grew to become directors of the next center.

Thanks to the resources Pre-K Partnerships have provided, they’ve been able to expand their centers rather than close. Unlike many day cares, they were able to survive COVID with these supports.

“I’m so happy to live in a city that is investing in the most important thing – education. The first five years of a child’s life build the foundation of the rest of their lives,” she said.

Cristina’s wish? That United Way’s programs were available to all child care centers.

“It’s so important,” Cristina said. “If we have the resources we need, we all have the ability to fully invest in children, so that they can be promised a tomorrow.”





“Here in the City of Austin, we believe that investing in early childhood is essential for the long-term success and well-being of our community. By providing high-quality early learning opportunities, we are laying the foundation for a brighter future and fostering a generation of engaged and thriving individuals.”

Vanessa Fuentes, Austin City Council Member, District 2

SAFE AND STIMULATING COMMUNITIES








TODAY IN AUSTIN/ TRAVIS COUNTY

- **1 in 3 children live in a very low or low opportunity neighborhood.**
Source: United Way for Greater Austin and Diversity Data Kids
- **Last year, Austin/Travis County invested \$459 in early childhood support for children in low-income households from the prenatal through age 5 period.**
Source: United Way for Greater Austin
- **Temporary COVID relief fund related investments raised the investments to \$632 per child under 6 from low-income households.**
Source: United Way for Greater Austin

SX6 Universal Goal: Families experience Austin/Travis County as a safe, child and family-centered community that invests in and designs joyful and engaging learning opportunities that honor exceptional needs, nurture healthy brain development, and ensure that children and families can thrive.

SX6 Targeted Goal: The Austin/Travis County community is a safe, child and family-centered community that invests and designs joyful and engaging learning opportunities that honor exceptional needs, nurture healthy brain development, and ensure that children and families, especially those who identify as BIPOC, are impacted by poverty, have exceptional needs, or possess complex documentation statuses, can thrive.

STRATEGIES

-  The coalition has clear and equitable systems that remove barriers to participation and center the voices of families with lived experiences to incorporate community voices in the coalition’s decision-making process.
-  The Community has connected/coordinated early childhood programs and resources that families can navigate.
-  Our community will collaborate to design and amplify shared messages that emphasize the paramount importance of prenatal to age 5 development that will generate action from caregivers to policymakers.
-  Our community will highlight existing, and advocate for the development of, safe and joyful spaces rooted in child-centered learning that are intentionally designed for all families.
-  Increase alignment in public-private sector funding levels to reflect the importance of the prenatal through age 5 period.
-  The SX6 Coalition will implement equity within its structures and processes, ensuring it truly represents the Austin/Travis County community. This involves prioritizing BIPOC families in decision-making and placing a deliberate focus on achieving racial equity in early childhood outcomes.
-  Build the capacity for advocacy and utilize data to inform efforts.



LOCAL EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION ADVOCATES CELEBRATED POLICY AND BUDGETARY WINS WITH AUSTIN CITY COUNCIL MEMBER VANESSA FUENTES AND HER STAFF AT CITY HALL IN NOVEMBER 2023.

Spotlight: GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY FOR LASTING CHANGE

We had a meaningful advocacy win in early November. Proposition 2 on the statewide ballot passed with 65% of Texans in favor of a local option property tax waiver for center-based child care providers serving children on state scholarships. In Travis County, 76% of voters were in favor of adoption – one of the highest voter approval levels in the state.

Two days later, the City of Austin was the first city to advance a 100% property tax abatement for qualifying child care providers. The City went one step further and directed the Interim

City Manager to explore mechanisms to provide similar relief to licensed home-based providers. The TX Restaurant Association, the LGBT and Asian chambers, and several providers joined Early Matters Greater Austin and SX6 in support.

Early Matters Greater Austin and SX6 worked in coordination with advocates, providers, and business leaders to get this measure across the finish line. Thank you for your advocacy along the way.

This initiative started at the Capitol as a bill sponsored by Senator West and Representative Talarico. Representative Goodwin filed a similar bill. Early Matters Greater Austin and SX6 led rally days, submitted letters of support, and drafted testimony for hearings. Ultimately, SB1145 passed with strong bipartisan support, setting up the opportunity for a constitutional amendment on the statewide ballot.

In coordination with statewide advocates, the TX Restaurant Association, SX6, and local elected officials co-hosted a press conference and GOTV rally to increase awareness about Prop 2.

It culminated in a strong turnout in favor of passage.

There was a lot of positive media attention along the way. You can see the full list of local articles [here](#).

As always, the work is not done. There are many high-quality child care providers that serve children on state scholarships that don't qualify for this exemption, and this exemption doesn't solve the underlying systemic problems. But it helps and we need all the help we can get.

The next step is to engage with surrounding cities and counties to encourage them to adopt the property tax exemption. Travis County has already signaled their commitment to do so. This bipartisan win will help us make the case for future investments and legislative action at the Capitol next session.





COLLABORATING WITH BUSINESSES

EARLY MATTERS GREATER AUSTIN (EMGA)

EMGA is an alliance of current and retired business professionals focused on the critical relationship between access to high-quality early education and our state’s long-term economic success.

In 2018, **United Way for Greater Austin** and **E3 Alliance** formed EMGA to mobilize and unite the business community around the goal that children in Greater Austin enter Kindergarten prepared for school success. EMGA also encourages Austin-area employers to adopt family-friendly policies. Supportive workplace policies increase organizational productivity and support the physical and emotional health of employees and their families.

EMGA’s work is part of a collective impact initiative – the **Austin/Travis County SX6 Coalition** – led by United Way for Greater Austin. EMGA is a part of Early Matters TX and the collaborative efforts of Dallas, San Antonio, El Paso, and Waco in creating and growing statewide support and advocacy for early childhood development.

Spotlight: EARLY MATTERS GREATER AUSTIN AND THE TEXAS RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION

ADAPTED FROM [EATER AUSTIN](#)

Building off a [2023 study](#) about nontraditional hour child care needs in Austin/Travis County, United Way launched mini grants to child care providers to expand care hours to early mornings and late evenings. Following this pilot, Early Matters Greater Austin, in collaboration with the Texas Restaurant Association, conducted [a survey](#) to identify the days and times with the greatest needs for hospitality workers.

“If we want to be able to have a diverse workforce, we have to figure out child care,” says Adam Orman, co-owner of L’Oca d’Oro and Bambino in Austin, who helped draft the questionnaire. “And it has to be businesses, government, and private partnership.”

The results of the survey showed most respondents currently have some child care, mostly provided by a partner or relatives, but it doesn’t cover all their work hours. These parents and caregivers frequently need one or two additional days per week, particularly weeknights and weekends, and they can afford to pay \$10 to \$25 per shift.

Equipped with the survey data, Early Matters Greater Austin has been talking with an Austin preschool about providing care early Saturday morning to mid-afternoon, for restaurant workers working the brunch shift. The next step will be to seek restaurant owners who want to secure slots for their staff for a pilot program that Early Matters hopes to launch soon.

“We’ve had a number of single parents, mostly moms, at our restaurants who need to be able to work nights and weekends when there are few to no good childcare options. These are good jobs that are either pushing parents out or forcing them to make impossible decisions. We need better non-traditional hour child care for all parents, but especially restaurant workers, who we know are the largest private workforce in Texas.”

**Adam Orman, Co-owner,
L’Oca d’Oro and Bambino**

YOUR INFLUENCE ON THE JOURNEY

- **IF YOU'RE A PARENT:** Play every day. Research confirms that children learn better when adults talk, sing, and read with them daily. Support early learning through positive, engaging, fun interactions with the children in your life. Get parenting tools and techniques appropriate to your child's age by signing up for Bright by Text – just text Text SMARTATX to 274448 to begin receiving parenting tips and local resources in English or Spanish.
- **IF YOU'RE A SERVICE PROVIDER:** Join the SX6 Coalition. Collaborate, innovate, and empower family voices, while aiming for access, equity, and quality. Together we can make a meaningful, systemic, and sustainable impact for our children, our families, and the community we serve.
- **IF YOU'RE A BUSINESS LEADER:** High-quality early learning can transform the economic trajectory of our region. Investing in early education is an investment in the workforce of today AND the workforce of tomorrow. Join Early Matters Greater Austin – invest in early learning, influence public policy, create family friendly workplaces, and advance innovation. To join EMGA or to learn more, please visit earlymattersgreateraustin.org.
- **IF YOU'RE A POLICY MAKER:** Prioritize policies that address the needs of families and young children. Recognize that policies and funding for early childhood have the highest return-on-investment for communities. Strong early childhood systems and infrastructure create better education, health, social, and economic outcomes, increasing revenue and reducing the need for costly social spending on services and supports later. Human capital is a critical part of our community's infrastructure, and that foundation is laid in our children's first 2,000 days.
- **IF YOU'RE A PHILANTHROPIST:** Consider opportunities to seed innovation; build capacity to research, pilot, and scale programs; improve systems to enhance coordination; and connect our coalition to resources to make this happen. With your help, we can reach more disadvantaged children in their foundational first 2,000 days.



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The purpose of this glossary is to provide a definition for the terms used throughout the strategic plan. The glossary of terms was created to ensure this strategic plan is accessible to all readers because we recognize that some of these terms may be jargon for some or the terms used might be different than the ones used by others.

This glossary is a crucial component of the SX6 Coalition's strategic plan, co-designed to ensure clarity and inclusiveness in our communication. By providing clear definitions, we aim to make our strategic plan accessible to all readers, recognizing that some terms may be unfamiliar or interpreted differently by various audiences. Through this glossary, we emphasize our commitment to centering race and equity by making our language understandable and our intentions transparent. We believe that understanding and using a shared vocabulary is a foundational step in fostering equitable and inclusive practices, ensuring that all partners and community members can engage fully and meaningfully with our work. We recognize that there are varying definitions to some of the terms and concepts below and are committed to ensure that this is a living document, as we grow and learn together.

Access to early care and education: families, with reasonable effort and affordability—no more than 7% of the family's household income, can enroll their child in an arrangement that supports the child's development and meets the parents' needs.

Affordable: the financial burden experienced by families when participating in an early childhood program or service is feasible. Affordability includes factors such as out-of-pocket expenses, income-based co-payments, and the percentage of family income dedicated to the costs of participation. The cost of child care is affordable when it does not exceed 7% of the household income.

BIPOC: stands for Black, Indigenous, People of Color and is an umbrella term used to refer to people who are not White. BIPOC is used to acknowledge the shared experiences of marginalization (being left out) and discrimination faced by Black and Indigenous people throughout history, as well as people of color more broadly. It also highlights the disproportionate, or uneven, impact of systemic (present in many/all areas of a system) racism on Black and Indigenous communities.

Culturally affirming: a philosophy or approach that recognizes and respects the cultural backgrounds, experiences, and identities of students, parents, clients, etc. Key components of culturally affirming practices include honoring

diverse identities and perspectives; using an asset-based approach that builds on strengths; creates inclusive environments that foster a sense of belonging; and encourages reflection, action, and motivation around the topics of power and privilege.

Cultural humility: the ability and willingness to understand a person's identities related to race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, and social needs.

Developmentally appropriate parenting supports: strategies and practices that parents can use to nurture their child's growth and development at each stage of childhood. These approaches consider a child's physical, cognitive, social, and emotional capabilities and provide the necessary support for them to learn and thrive.

Ethnicity: a social identity that divides people into smaller social groups based on characteristics such as shared sense of group membership, values, behavioral patterns, language, political and economic interests, history and ancestral geographical base. Other social identities can include race, language, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, social and economic status, religion, ability status, country of origin

Exceptional needs: describes the needs for children who have unique requirements that may require individualized support, accommodations,

or modifications to ensure their educational success and overall well-being. This strategic plan uses "exceptional needs" but other common terms used are children with special needs; children with disabilities; children with differing abilities; children with developmental delays or atypical development; children who are differently abled; neurodivergent.

Equitable: something that is fair or just, especially in terms of distributing resources, opportunities, or benefits. It entails ensuring that everyone has access to what they need to thrive, regardless of their background, identity, or circumstances, and often involves recognizing and addressing existing disparities (gaps or imbalances), inequalities and systemic racism and oppression.

High-quality: the definition for high-quality early care and education programs is based upon the data sources available and does not always encompass other quality measures that we do not have data for or may not be quantifiable. For the purposes of this strategic plan, a high-quality early care and education program meets one or more of the following criteria: 1) is nationally accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) or the National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Programs (NAC), and/or other national accreditation recognized by the Texas Workforce Commission; 2) has a Texas Rising Star four-star quality rating; 3) is an Early Head Start/Head Start (EHS/HS) program. If programs do not meet this definition but are working toward one of the above criteria are considered to be on a pathway to quality.

Inclusion: authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policy making in a way that shares power

Perinatal: the period of time when you become pregnant and up to a year after giving birth.

Postnatal: "after birth," refers to the period of time immediately after birth

Prenatal: "before birth," refers to the period of time from becoming pregnant up to the moment before giving birth.

Prenatal development: includes the development of the embryo and fetus during gestation, which begins at fertilization and continues until birth.

Race: a social and political construct (idea) that categorizes and ranks groups of people based on physical features, such as skin color, and ascribes social meaning to those groups

Racial disparities: the imbalances and incongruities between the treatment of racial groups, including economic status, income, housing options, societal treatment, safety, and countless other aspects of life and society.

Trauma-informed care: a framework that helps people who have experienced negative consequences after exposure to dangerous experiences. It focuses on the impact of trauma on an individual's life, including how trauma may affect their response to behavioral health services. TIC can improve patient engagement, treatment adherence or continuation, health outcomes, and provider and staff wellness.

Trauma-informed parenting/caregiver supports: strategies and approaches that families/caregivers can use to raise a child who has experienced trauma in a healthy and supportive way. These approaches acknowledge the impact of trauma on a child's development, behavior, and emotional well-being, and aim to create a safe and healing environment. Support may also include addressing trauma experienced by the caregiver. Supports are considered best practice and can be applied universally.

Workforce development: programs, policies, and activities used to sustain, create, and retain a workforce of people who obtain and maintain a living wage—an income level that meets a person or family's basic needs, including housing, food, healthcare, child care, transportation, and other essential expenses, while also allowing for participation in the social and economic life of the community. Workforce development programs might also include training that includes blended and stackable postsecondary credentials that provide clear and defined pathways for economic upward mobility. It is a key component of community economic development that focuses on people rather than businesses to enhance a region's economic stability and prosperity.



United Way for Greater Austin

Barbara Grant Boneta,
Director of Austin/Travis County Success By 6 Coalition
barbara.grantboneta@uwatx.org

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unitedwayaustin.org