



2010 ANNUAL REPORT

25 Years Mobilizing for Children

For a quarter century, the Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition (BCAC) has been a champion advocating on behalf of Bridgeport's children and families. BCAC is proud to have been at the forefront of many efforts that have made a difference in the lives of children, consistently shining a light on the challenges facing our children, demonstrating the disparities that exist in providing much needed programs and services, and mobilizing the power of the people to create positive change for families living in Connecticut's largest city.

BCAC Welcomes New Executive Director

In June 2009, Marilyn Ondrasik announced her departure from BCAC after 17 years as executive director. Her commitment and dedication were unparalleled and her consistent leadership was a driving force behind the many successes BCAC can claim.



In September 2009, BCAC entered a transition phase, most ably led by assistant director, Barbara Edinberg. After an extensive search, Mary Pat Curran Healy was selected as BCAC's new executive director effective February 2010.

Mary Pat is well known and very well respected in Bridgeport and throughout Connecticut. Prior to joining BCAC, she was the community relations and government liaison for AT&T Connecticut. Mary Pat's passion for children's issues, combined with her extensive knowledge of community outreach and fund development, will be a tremendous asset to BCAC.

Mary Pat will use her vision and expertise to strengthen BCAC's voice, which we will use to continue researching the issues, educating our community and mobilizing for change.

25th Anniversary Breakfast



"Children who don't have advocates like BCAC are falling behind by leaps and bounds."

Mayor Cory Booker,
City of Newark, New Jersey

The Honorable Cory Booker, Mayor of Newark, New Jersey, electrified a sold-out crowd at BCAC's 25th Anniversary Breakfast in

April 2010. Holding the audience spellbound, Booker left us energized and more convinced than ever of our ability to effect positive change.

To mark its 25th anniversary, BCAC took the opportunity to honor its six former board chairs for their outstanding service to the children of Bridgeport. Nancy Gilliland, Pastor Anthony Bennett, Margie Powell, Rae Sharp, Edie Cassidy, and Jan Park were recognized with a standing ovation and heartfelt thanks from a very appreciative audience.

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Affordable, Quality Health Care Coverage Within Reach

This year, we kept health care reform in the public eye by educating the community about Connecticut's health care reform law, SustiNet, and mobilizing support for national health care reform.

Working hand-in-hand with the statewide healthcare4every1 campaign, we:

- Celebrated passage of SustiNet by organizing two awareness events in Stamford with nearly 100 participants
- Expanded our reach into the Latino community, meeting with more than 50 clergy and community leaders in Stamford and organizing Bridgeport Latinos for healthcare4every1
- Generated support for national health care reform through ongoing regional media coverage
- Mobilized parents, clergy and community leaders to attend national health care reform Town Hall Meetings in Norwalk and Bridgeport and a vigil in Stamford
- Made 10 presentations throughout the region and organized community meetings with health care leaders, clergy and small business owners

BCAC By The Numbers 2009-2010

5,000 people read three reports produced and distributed by BCAC

1,320 parents took BCAC surveys

700+ signatures collected to preserve state-funded assistance programs

675 people attended BCAC events

27 references to BCAC cited in regional print, radio and television news outlets

20 Task Force meetings organized with 400 people

100's of phone calls and emails generated to support our issues

BCAC's voice, joined with many others, helped to create the momentum needed to enact the national Affordable Care Act passed on March 23, 2010. Here in Connecticut, the SustiNet Plan is being designed and readied for implementation. Together, the federal reform bill and SustiNet will make affordable, quality health care coverage within reach for state residents.

25 Years Mobilizing for Children

Helping Low-Income Children and Their Parents Obtain Insurance

With the continued economic downturn, BCAC stepped up outreach efforts to enroll parents and children in the state's HUSKY health insurance program for low-income families. During the year, BCAC helped 307 children and 151 parents apply for or renew their HUSKY coverage.

BCAC's HUSKY Outreach Collaborative provides the only forum in Fairfield County for outreach workers to identify and address enrollment issues in the program and receive training on HUSKY policies and procedures. The Collaborative continues to meet quarterly, with over 25 active members from hospitals, community health centers, child care programs, and health departments from Bridgeport, Norwalk and Stamford.

Survey Supports Patient-Centered Health Care



This past year, we addressed the "medical home" model of health care, which is strongly supported by state and national health care reform efforts. In this model, children and adults

have a health care provider who is responsible for ensuring comprehensive, culturally appropriate, coordinated patient-centered health care.

BCAC organized five focus groups and surveyed over 335 parents to identify the most important factors in choosing and staying with their child's doctor. The survey found that parents value the thoroughness of the doctor's exam, being respected and being heard. BCAC shared these findings with the SustiNet Patient-Centered Medical Home Advisory Committee, which is developing recommendations to implement the medical home model of care statewide.



Residents Voice Concerns at Children's Issues Forum

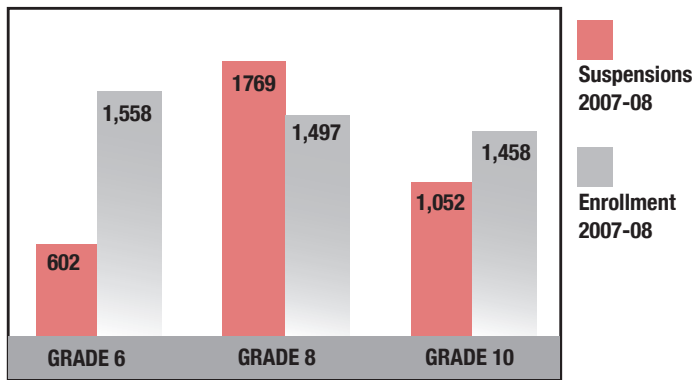
More than 100 Bridgeport residents met with five of Bridgeport's eight legislators at this year's Children's Issues Forum held in December 2009. Rep. Andres Ayala, Rep. Christopher Caruso, Senator Ed Gomes, Rep. Auden Grogins, and Rep. Jack Hennessey reported on the fiscal and social services outlook at the state level and their plans to support Bridgeport's children, while residents conveyed which critical issues held the highest priorities. The roundtable discussions focused on education, health care and state-funded services for low-income families.

Recession Hurts State of the Child

BCAC's signature report, *State of the Child 2009*, indicated that the recession continued to affect Bridgeport area children. Living in poverty puts children at risk for poor health, poor school performance, family and community violence, and homelessness. BCAC is committed to recognizing and celebrating positive changes that have occurred and will continue to call attention to those areas where conditions have deteriorated and worsened.

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Keeping Our Eye on School Suspensions



In December, BCAC released *Lost Class Time: The State of Suspensions in Bridgeport Schools*, which examined the extent of in-school and out-of-school suspensions. BCAC also recommended ways to further address this pressing issue.

The Good News

Bridgeport public schools have reduced out-of-school suspensions by more than 40% since the 2006-07 school year. This represents tremendous progress and BCAC applauds the school system's efforts.

More Work To Do

Nonetheless, our research found significant room for improvement. Despite the progress made, Bridgeport students still lost nearly 20,000 school days during the 2007-08 school year due to suspensions.

BCAC released the report in a joint news conference with Dr. John Ramos, Bridgeport Superintendent of Schools, who presented an update on the district's current efforts to reduce suspensions. The report received regional media coverage, drawing even more attention to the issue.

Early Childhood Teacher Retention

Recognizing that continuity in early education is very important to a child's learning and healthy development, BCAC investigated the factors that contribute to teacher turnover in Bridgeport early childhood programs and made recommendations to address the root causes. *A New Catch-22: Teacher Turnover in Early Education*, released in January, found that when teachers working in community-based early education programs earn their bachelor's degree, they are likely to leave to take a position in the public school system, where the salaries, benefits and hours are much more attractive.



With limited resources to increase salaries, it will be difficult for community-based early education programs to be competitive and have the ability to retain staff. Over the coming year, BCAC will be working hard to preserve state funding for education and early care programs.

Families in the Recession

Our second annual jobseekers survey was completed in March and provided important insight for better understanding the far-reaching impact the recession is having on families. BCAC partnered with Career Resources to survey 982 jobseekers in the greater Bridgeport area. The survey indicated that residents are without work for longer periods of time, unemployment is a regional issue and basic needs are on the rise. However, the use of available services, including food stamps, heating assistance and unemployment benefits, is inconsistent. Armed with this knowledge, BCAC will continue to advocate for a state budget that supports children and families in need.

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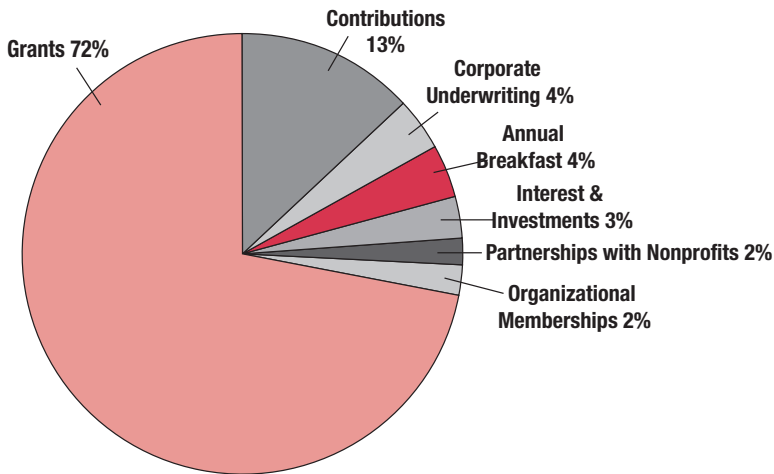
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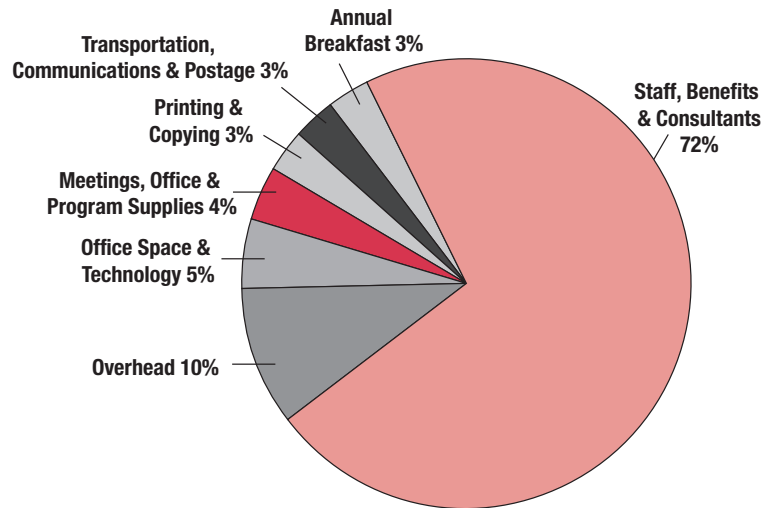
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