Who We Are
The University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development is a university-community public-private informational resource and management facility that contributes to the welfare of children, youth, families, and communities in the greater Pittsburgh area, throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, across the nation, and around the world.

Who We Serve
We function as an intermediate organization serving those who work to improve the lives of children, families, and communities. These constituents include faculty and administrators of the University, service professionals and agencies, policy makers, as well as public and private funders.
About the cover
Our cover celebrates the 30-year history of the Office of Child Development listing the significant programs we have initiated, lead, or partnered on. The images of parents and children represent those whose lives we strive to improve.
From the Co-Directors

Major highlights of the year include the following new activities:

The Office’s Local Advisory Board has been restructured. It is now chaired by Kevin Kearns, Professor in Pitt’s Graduate School of Public and International Affairs and a specialist in non-profit management. Further, several new members have been added. A major task for the Board is to contribute to strategic planning for the Office, and three committees have been created for this purpose: The New Pittsburgh, Scholarship, and External Affairs. The major purpose is to chart the current and future needs of children and families in Pittsburgh and how the Office should contribute to improving their welfare.

The Office, the School of Education’s Center for Urban Education (CUE) and its Supporting Early Education and Development (SEED) joined to form the Race and Early Childhood Collaborative which produced a needs assessment regarding Positive Racial Identity Development in Early Education (PRIDE). The report found racial identity begins in the first few years of life, parents and teachers have difficulty promoting positive racial identity among African-American children, and there are very few materials available to help them. The report was widely publicized, and the partnership is currently creating materials for parents and teachers that will facilitate adult-child communication and promote positive racial identity.

Pittsburgh Public Schools’ Arsenal PreK-5 and the Office are partnering to pilot a text messaging intervention with the dual purpose of 1) reducing chronic absenteeism among pre-k to third grade students and 2) improving school-to-family communication. Messages are positive and include information about the child’s school day, school updates, and helpful tips. By the end of the first intervention year, the average absence rate decreased by 17% and chronic absenteeism decreased by 25% in pre-k and first grade.

The Office conducted an assessment of the needs of military families in Pittsburgh. Many services are offered to families living near a military base, but one is not close to Pittsburgh. The study revealed several issues that local military families face and produced an agenda for action.

The Office’s international activities were extended when the co-directors were invited to Kazakhstan to conduct a two-day workshop and consult with a variety of providers of services for mothers and young children. A report outlined several courses of action that could be considered.

As always, we are indebted to our wonderful staff and funders who support and carry out these and many other projects.

Christina J. Groark, Ph.D.  Robert B. McCall, Ph.D.
Co-Directors
OCD developed its first major projects in interdisciplinary research, needs assessments, indicators, university-community networking, service demonstrations, program evaluation, and policy studies—domains that would endure as project foci for 30 years.

Enduring Legacies of University-Community Engagement

The Office of Child Development Celebrates 30 Years

The Origin and Foundation

Beginning in 1983, Mark S. Strauss, from the Department of Psychology, and Carl N. Johnson, from the Program of Child Development and Child Care in the School of Social Work, observed that many of their faculty colleagues had interests in children, youth, and families, they were scattered across the university landscape, and they often worked in isolation from both their academic colleagues and professionals in the community. Strauss and Johnson reasoned that collaboration across disciplinary barriers might enrich University projects with complementary perspectives and skills, and academic information might be put to better use for the welfare of children and families if projects were conducted collaboratively with community professionals.

So Strauss and Johnson organized an interdisciplinary group of faculty to create a unit that would facilitate interdisciplinary education and research, promote mutually beneficial partnerships between faculty and community professionals, and disseminate information to service professionals, policymakers, and the general public. The new Office was to be an all-university support unit—it would create, facilitate, and serve collaborative projects that eventually would be owned and operated by the participants. It would not operate the projects it spawned.

In 1986, Strauss and Johnson got the University to contribute the salary for a director, and The Howard Heinz Endowment and the Buhl Foundation provided initial operating funds. Robert B. McCall was hired to be the Office’s Director, and he hired Christina J. Groark to be the Office’s Human Services Coordinator and eventually Co-Director. These two provided experience in scholarship, public communications, human services, and policy—a combination that would provide the foundation for 30 years of University-community projects.

The Early Years

Much of the first two years were devoted to meetings with people from the University, policymakers, and funders to explore potential services and collaborations and create a climate in which interdisciplinary collaborations could germinate. Soon Dr. Strauss succeeded in obtaining a federal grant for an interdisciplinary training program in child abuse and neglect, and later an Interdisciplinary Child Welfare Training Grant was obtained. The Office also helped United Mental Health get a grant in 1987, the first of many significant grants it would help other agencies obtain.

During the next four years, OCD would develop the first major projects in interdisciplinary research, needs assessments, indicators, university-community networking, service demonstrations, program evaluation, and policy studies—domains that would endure as project foci for 30 years.

Legacy 1. The Study of Children’s Lives. For example, OCD brought together Jay Belsky from Penn State and Susan Campbell, Celia Brownell, and Jeff Cohen from Pitt’s Department of Psychology to create one of nine national sites of the National
The Alliance for Infants was the nation’s first organized community outreach to at-risk children. It evolved into an independent organization that still exists.
Strategic Planning and Policy Studies

The Office then began to conduct more strategic planning activities and policy studies. For example, it was awarded one of the five national sites of the Carnegie Corporation of New York’s Starting Points initiative to improve the outcomes of young children in situations of government transitions.

In the late 1990’s, the Office was instrumental in putting together faculty from Penn State and Temple Universities into the Universities Children’s Policy Consortium (UCPC), which was devoted to improving policies for children and families. In 2001, Governor Schweiker created the Governor’s Task Force on Early Care and Education, and the UCPC provided the Task Force with basic information on the availability and nature of training early care and education staff and professionals in the state’s colleges and universities, the needs of parents in Pennsylvania, and the quality of early care in Pennsylvania. The Task Force Report became the blueprint for early care and education policy in the state.

Legacy 7. Family Support Policy Board/Partnerships for Family Support. The Office worked with communities to establish family support centers, and ultimately a network of centers was created that provides professional development for staff and continual quality improvement strategies for the centers. These activities are staffed by Partnerships for Family Support, which is managed by the Office. The oversight board, the Allegheny Family Support Policy Board, a collaboration of 25-30 parents, stakeholders and family support center representatives, has achieved national recognition and been awarded grants to demonstrate innovative community efforts.

Model Intervention and Evaluation Projects

The Heinz Endowments and the R. K. Mellon Foundation among others began Pittsburgh’s Early Childhood Initiative to bring to scale quality early care and education for low-resource families, and they asked the University, which asked the Office, to create and operate an Early Childhood Initiative Demonstration Model Early Care and Education Program for low-resource children in two Pittsburgh communities. Ultimately, these centers demonstrated what it would take to provide high quality care to low-resource children and that it could be accomplished, and simultaneously these centers achieved the highest environmental quality ratings in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Legacy 8. Keystone Stars Technical Assistance. The Office became the Keystone STARS Technical Assistance Center for the south west region of Pennsylvania to help early care and education centers and family-based providers improve their quality, a function the Office still performs.

Legacy 9. Strengthen Early Learning Supports. This project was aimed at helping more low-income children with and without special needs to have access to better quality early care and education and be better prepared for school through improved parenting and better literacy skills. Transition activities in some targeted schools and some coaching programs for early care and education providers have been sustained.

Legacy 10. Early Childhood Partnerships. In 2011, the Early Childhood Partnerships (ECP), formerly housed in Pediatrics, joined the Office and brought complementary projects and skills, especially in providing technical assistance to teachers.

ECP promotes “best practices” for early childhood professionals, young children and their families via on-site mentoring, consultation, professional development and applied research.

Last year, HealthyCHILD partnered with 6 early childhood programs to support over 250 early childhood professionals and 3000 young children and families.

STARS TA provided supports to 78 Early Childhood Education facilities in the last year.
broad experience in evaluating early care and education programming in the region, and a specialization in young children with disabilities. ECP is dedicated to improving the lives of vulnerable children and families especially those at developmental risk and with disabilities (birth to 8 years) and to enhancing the practices of the professionals who support them. Core programs include HealthyCHILD, HeathlyInfants, COMET (Center on Mentoring for Effective Teaching) and SPECS (Scaling Progress in Early Childhood Settings) applied research.

**Legacy 11. Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants.** These projects highlighted the need for mental health consultation in early care and education facilities that led to the creation of the statewide Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) project. The Office continues to provide support to early care and education centers having children with behavioral challenges.

**Legacy 12. Pathways to School Success ("Ready Freddy").** A major limitation on children’s educational success is the fact that many young children from low-resource environments do not enroll or start school on time and often do not attend regularly. So the Office created Pathways to School Success, which prepares parents, children, and teachers for the transition of young children to and through kindergarten, a program that has been implemented in Pittsburgh and numerous locations across the country.

**Legacy 13. The Office’s Program Evaluation Unit.** The Office obtained two grants from the federal Department of Education to create a program evaluation unit that would conduct process and outcome evaluations of primarily community created and operated service programs. Among its more prominent projects were a statewide evaluation of post-traumatic stress disorder services and a Juvenile Justice Quality Improvement program. More recently it has conducted the evaluation of a large teenage sexual activity and pregnancy prevention intervention conducted by Carnegie Mellon University. Its interdisciplinary program evaluation function soon became one of the largest of its kind in a USA University, and one of the few devoted almost exclusively to evaluating community-created and operated services. Over the years, the unit has collaborated with dozens of community agencies to evaluate their projects; most recently the Office is working with the State and Allegheny County Human Services to evaluate the SAMHSA funded LAUNCH project.

**Legacy 14. International Orphanage Intervention and Evaluation.** In the 1990’s, the International Assistance Group, an agency that specializes in placing Russian children for adoption in the Pittsburgh region, asked the Office to go to Russia to assess emerging services for families and how to improve the quality of orphanages in the post-Yeltsin era. In 2000-2005 a model intervention in a St. Petersburg (Russian Federation) institution for children birth to 4-years of age was implemented collaboratively with Russian colleagues and funded principally by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. The restructured orphanage produced substantial improvements in the children’s physical, cognitive, and social-emotional development relative to children in unimproved orphanages. In 2007-2012 the Office also followed the parents and children who lived in these and other orphanages who transitioned to families in the USA and St. Petersburg. As a consequence of this work, the Office was asked to assess institutions and evaluate interventions created and implemented by other groups in

ECMH provided services to 106 children, and their teachers and parents/caregivers in the last year.

The “Ready Freddy” Pathways to Kindergarten Success program working with Pittsburgh Public Schools reached 700 kids and their families this past year with its message that kindergarten lays the foundation for future education success.

Co-directors Robert McCall and Christina Groark have spent more than 17 years studying, with Russian colleagues, children reared in orphanages in the Russian Federation, and in China and Latin America. This group has more data than any other on the early development of institutionally reared children in Russia, many of whom have disabilities. Their work has influenced policy in Russia — making institutions such as orphanages more family-like.
El Salvador, Nicaragua, and China. Indeed, the Office is now among the most experienced organizations in the world at evaluating institutions for infants and toddlers and interventions designed to improve their quality of life.

**Legacy 15. Positive Racial Identity.** Most recently, the Office collaborated with the School of Education to conduct a needs assessment of practices and materials available to parents and early childhood educators to promote positive racial identity in young African American children. The project determined that the need was great, and efforts are continuing to develop and implement strategies to address this need.

**OCD Today**

The Office has become probably the largest, most comprehensive, and most applied university-based unit devoted to forging collaborations among faculty, community professionals, and policy makers to create, fund, implement, and manage innovative projects that attempt to directly contribute to the health, education, and welfare of children, youth, and families in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the nation, and beyond.

It started with essentially three people and a budget of $150,000 per year and ultimately grew to employ a staff of 50-60, mentor 10-15 students per year, and operate with an annual budget of $6-8 million of which 90+% is external grant funding. Further, this operating budget does not include millions of dollars the Office has brought to the community and helped other agencies to obtain. As an investment, the Office has consistently leveraged every dollar invested in it to raise approximately $20 of specific project funding.

More importantly, The Office itself represents a highly successful example of a university-community engagement unit that originated before such a theme became popular in some universities across the country. Its program successes are best represented by the 13 enduring legacies outlined above—projects and services that the Office created, initially funded, implemented, and/or managed that have become independent agencies or continue to be operated by the Office.

But the Office’s most crucial contribution has been to improve the well-being of countless children and families. Some have been supported with respect and dignity so they achieve life success, many children have been given better quality early care and education, some children at risk of disability have been placed on a path toward success and accomplishment, and many services and policies have been given research-based information that has improved their quality and made them more successful in helping untold numbers of children and families. These are the enduring legacies of university-community engagement in general and the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development in particular.

**Vision**
The opportunity for all children, youth, and families to develop in safe and supportive environments and achieve their life potentials.

**Mission**
Through mutually beneficial partnerships with our constituents, we facilitate and develop new knowledge, services, and policies to improve the lives of children and families. We do this work in five domains:

- Interdisciplinary education and training.
- Interdisciplinary research and scholarship.
- Human service demonstration programs, networking, and strategic planning.
- Program monitoring and evaluation.
- Needs assessments and policy studies.

**Purpose**

- Create and maintain a supportive and facilitative atmosphere for its constituencies so that interdisciplinary and collaborative activities may be conceived, nurtured, implemented, and managed.
- Provide guidance, assistance, and management for the planning, funding, development, implementation, and operation of innovative collaborative systems, projects, and programs in its domains of activities.
- Provide and clearly communicate balanced, non-partisan, research-based information on service needs and program effectiveness to our constituencies.
- Provide information, technical assistance, and interdisciplinary and management services to collaborative projects pertaining to university community partnerships; collaborative demonstration service and policy projects; strategic planning and systems analysis; program monitoring, evaluation, and needs assessments; interdisciplinary and applied scholarship, education, and training; and other activities that promote the welfare of children, youth, families and the communities in which they live.
- Disseminate research and professional information about children, youth, and families through publications, presentations, the popular media, and personal contact with those individuals who can use this information, including academics, service professionals, policy makers, parents, and citizens.
- Exemplify a university-community partnership and explore, demonstrate, and communicate to other universities and communities how such a venture can be beneficial to all partners.
Principles of Operation

Collaboration and Partnership

We work in collaboration with organizations or members of the community in a partnership manner. We partner with them on mutually beneficial projects funded by external agencies. Our partners share the rights, responsibilities, and credit as we select a topic, plan and implement a project, operate it, and report its results.

We construct interdisciplinary groups to work in and with. We support educational, scholarly, service, evaluation, and policy projects on any topic pertaining to children, youth, and families. We do not focus exclusively on one or two problems, issues, or content themes.

We facilitate, coordinate, and help others meet their goals and objectives. As a result, we do not necessarily play a lead or continuing role in projects. While we do operate numerous projects when collaborators request that we play a continuing role, we also enhance capacity in other organizations and individuals so that they, not OCD, can operate the project. We plan an appropriate role consistent with a project’s mission and principles, regardless of whether the project’s funding comes to OCD or to another organization. We spin off or transfer projects when they no longer need us or do not fit our project criteria.

As long as core funding permits, we do not charge or extract quid pro quo benefits from participating groups or projects. We want to preserve trust and confidence in OCD as a fair and independent manager of collaborations. However, funded projects that ask us to perform a continuing administrative or technical service typically pay us for that service.

Responsiveness and Flexibility

We are responsive and flexible in selecting special projects. Because of our partnership style, new projects are typically selected when a need is recognized, agencies and personnel are available, and funding for the project is possible. We often collaborate with our partners to set project agenda. We are prepared to operate in a timely, often rapid, manner. We try to maintain the capability and flexibility to meet our partner’s needs.

Neutrality and Openness

Our services and assistance are available to any of our constituencies, and anyone is eligible to be a partner in our collaborative projects.

We do not operate direct services. Since we try not to compete with our constituencies, we do not deliver routine professional or human services. We may coordinate existing services and supervise case-management functions in situations in which it is necessary or desirable to do so.

We promote the welfare of children, youth, and families, but we are not a partisan political advocate. Instead of advocating for specific pieces of legislation or issues, we operate as an independent, credible, unbiased, and balanced source of information and as an administrative manager of service demonstrations, program evaluations, needs assessments, and policy projects on behalf of children, youth, and families.

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Project Criteria

We consider the following criteria before taking on a project:

- The project pertains to children, youth, families, or the communities in which they live.
- The project contains an innovative demonstration of new knowledge, techniques, best practices, and state-of-the-art activities intended to create new information about the project, its feasibility, and its effectiveness.
- Some appropriate evaluation will be conducted to assess the project’s process and outcome effectiveness.
- The project has implications for education, research, services, policy, or the welfare of children, youth, and families beyond the specific project itself, and some provision is made to communicate the results of the project.
- The project is a collaboration of stakeholders operating in a partnership mode.

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The mission of the Office of Child Development (OCD) is to improve the lives of children and families.

Most of OCD's projects involve four basic functions:

- **Analyze** information from research and professional practice.
- **Innovate** with service demonstrations and applied research.
- **Learn** and improve through monitoring and evaluation.
- **Change** practice and policy based on knowledge.

Although these functions often occur in this sequence, they can interact and overlap with each other throughout the process of developing, implementing, and evaluating projects.

**We impact policy by**

- Sharing the results of our work with practitioners, researchers and policy makers
- Staying connected to local, state, and national advocacy efforts
- Designing and engaging in collaborative work between researchers and policy makers
Publications


OCD staff communicate information from their experiences and projects to professionals who can implement that knowledge to improve additional groups of children and families.
Over a two year period, HealthyInfants mentoring has resulted in significant improvements in positive parenting practices. Similar patterns of skill acquisition occurred in both rural and urban settings.

Since 2010, OCD has conducted program evaluation research for the Include Me (IM) initiative in collaboration with the Arc of PA and the PA Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education to document the efficacy of the IM teacher inclusion mentoring model for over 1200 students with severe disabilities, in 120 school districts, with 800 teachers, and with 1400 parents.


Many OCD projects produce progress and final reports for funders and policymakers to inform practice and policy.

Inter-Agency Reports


Workshops and Trainings


Cullinan, S.L., & Keenan, K.E. (2015, October). Parenting interactions with children: Checklist of observations linked to outcomes (PICCOLO). Workshop provided for NPHS Program staff. Wheeling, WV.

Cullinan, S. L., & Keenan, K. E. (2016, January). What do you do with the mad that you feel? Helping children manage anger and learn self-control. Workshop provided for Pittsburgh Public School Early Childhood/Early Intervention Program staff. Pittsburgh, PA.


OCD staff provide training to many different groups of professionals in Pittsburgh, the Commonwealth, nationally and internationally.
### University Courses

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<td>Psychosocial aspects of children’s illness.</td>
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<td>Applied Developmental Psychology, School of Education, University of Pittsburgh, PA.</td>
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Grants

New Projects


Continuing Projects


### Grant History Summary

All amounts are in US Dollars.

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<tr>
<td>Special Project Grants</td>
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</table>
Office of Child Development

Staff Listing

Co-Directors
Christina J. Groark
Robert B. McCall

Assistant Director
Kenneth Smythe-Leistico

Division Directors
Tracy Larson  
*Early Childhood Partnerships*
Joan Eichner  
*Applied Research and Evaluation*
Roger Fustich  
*Administrative Operations*
Laurie A. Mulvey  
*Service Demonstrations*

Faculty Advisor
Stephen J. Bagnato

Project Directors
Sheila R. Beasley  
*Family Support Outreach*
Bernadette Bennermon  
*STARS TA*
Leigh Carlson-Hernandez  
*Family Support Policy Board*
Doris A. Dick, Assistant Director  
*Administrative Operations*
Christopher J. Dunkerley  
*Early Head Start*
Sharon L. Geibel  
*Early Childhood Mental Health*
Regina Jones  
*Partnerships for Family Support*
Penny K. Lang  
*School Age Care*
Stephanie McCarthy  
*Applied Initiatives*
Lucas O. Musewe  
*MIS Director, PFS*
Kenneth Smythe-Leistico  
*Communications*
Aisha White  
*Ready Freddy*
Colleen Young, Assistant Director  
*Service Demonstrations*

Staff
Ann M. Bisceglia
Denise A. Casino
Jessie Chatta
Amanda B. Cross
Stacy Cullinan
Betty Lee Dell
Sarah Dix
Denise Esposto
Maura Falchetti
Barbara F. French
Coni Hainsworth
Annette Harris
Amanda Harrison
Medina Jackson
Kelley Keenan
Joanna Kemp
Liz Kennedy
Afton Kirk
Pat Lehnhardt
Kelly M. Martin
Margaret M. Matesa
Miriam T. Messick
Gloria Rodriguez Ransom
Jennifer Lee Salaway
Ivonne Sanchez
Donna G. Sarneso
Janell Smith-Jones
Barbara R. Stolarz
Michael Tarquinio
Emie Tittnich
Angela Y. Tookes
Iris Winter

Graduate Students and Interns
Kyle Amsler
Tomasina Boyd
Kristyn Brier
Meghan Carey
Amanda Griffin
Kelsey Lytwak
Rachael Manfredo
Teresa Pizzella
Samantha Ricci