



BOSTON BIRTH TO 8 Collective Impact Efforts



Fast Facts

ORIGIN

In 2008, the office of Mayor Thomas M. Menino and the United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley developed strategies to ensure healthy child development and school readiness as a way to close the kindergarten achievement gap, resulting in an effort known as Thrive in 5. Thrive in 5 catalyzed a citywide conversation and sparked new thinking about how best to coordinate and deploy resources so that all children enter school ready to succeed. Thrive in 5 created an extensive network of community partners and built nationally recognized replicable models for its overarching strategies—parent engagement, quality early education and universal child development screening. Although the initiative ended in June 2016, much work remains to improve systems that support children and families across Boston. A variety of partners and stakeholders are currently redefining the next chapter, Boston Birth to 8, seizing on progress to date and building on the national momentum for early childhood. Boston Birth to 8 is led by United Way of Massachusetts Bay and the Boston Opportunity Agenda.

FINANCING

From 2009 to 2015, the annual budget for Thrive in 5 was \$1.5 million, 85 percent of which came from corporate and private foundation grants; the remainder came from government grants. United Way and the Boston Opportunity Agenda continue to provide resources, including funding and staff time for Boston Birth to 8 with continued support for targeted initiatives from corporate and private funding. For example, DRIVE, a developmental screening infrastructure, is supported by United Way's Private Equity/Venture Capital industry affinity group at approximately \$250,000 annually.

GOALS

- Parents will be able to obtain accurate, culturally appropriate information on child development, parenting and school readiness, as well as community resources to help to strengthen families.
- Boston will become the city with the highest quality early education and care system for all young children in all settings.
- Health care, early intervention and other systems that serve young children will succeed in earlier detection of and more effective responses to barriers to healthy child development and school readiness. This effort includes earlier detection of family and environmental conditions that can create "toxic stress" in young children.
- Boston's child- and family-serving service sectors will work together to ensure children's school readiness becomes and remains a top community priority.
- Boston Birth to 8 will refine, track and report on key metrics to ensure that children enter kindergarten developmentally on track.

LEAD AGENCY

United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley and the Boston Opportunity Agenda

MISSION

Boston Birth to 8 is a collective impact effort to ensure that all children—particularly those from low-income families, children of color, children with special needs and children who are learning English—have access to resources and opportunities that promote healthy development, early learning and school readiness, with the vision of ending the achievement gap and securing our city's future prosperity.

INITIATIVE BUDGET

Approximately \$1.75 million

START DATE

2009 (as Thrive in 5)

GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

The city of Boston, MA

KEY DEMOGRAPHICS

Population 667, 137 (2015 ACS)	Percent of Newborns at Low Birth Weight 8.8% (2014, NCH Statistics)
Population Under 5 37, 490 (2015 ACS)	Percent of Children in Food-Insecure Households 16.7% (2014, Feeding America, data for Suffolk County)
Percent of Children in Poverty 29.6% (2015 ACS)	

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PARENT SCREENERS

United Way's DRIVE initiative, which was started by Thrive in 5 in 2013 as Screen To Succeed, piloted an innovative peer-to-peer Parent Screener model to screen children not enrolled in formal early education and care, but who access other community-based resources. Parent screeners in each of Boston's 10 neighborhoods are trained to connect with families in their neighborhood who speak their language and administer the Ages and States Questionnaires (ASQ) with parents and their young children. Parent screeners share the ASQ results with families, help connect them to resources and follow up with them three months later. Almost 50 percent of the 4,000 children screened through this initiative were screened by Parent Screeners.

+ EARLY CHILDHOOD-LINC

An initiative of the Center for the Study of Social Policy, **Early Childhood-LINC** (Learning and Innovation Network for Communities) is developed by and for communities. Our mission is to support families and improve results for young children in communities across the country with a focus on accelerating the development of effective, integrated, local early childhood systems.

KEY STRATEGIES

Boston Birth to 8 is focused on three core strategies:

- **Family engagement and parent leadership:** Neighborhood-based organizations engage and empower parents and build community capacity to engage families in their children's learning and healthy development, starting at birth.
- **Quality early education:** Providers of early care and education seek to improve the quality of Boston's early care and education programs, using child outcomes to drive program improvement and supporting other innovative outcomes-based models.
- **Universal child development screening:** Through the DRIVE initiative, United Way is on track to build a citywide, universal screening network to measure children's development in their early years and provide a snapshot of children's developmental progress across the city.

MEASURES OF PROGRESS

APPROACH

With Thrive in 5 coming to a close, the leadership of Boston Birth to 8 has taken the opportunity to gather input from the community and key stakeholders to redefine its indicators of success.

INDICATORS

Age 0-3

- Percent of young children who have a medical home and regular check ups
- Percent of young children who are obese
- Percent of three-year olds meeting developmental milestones in all five domains measured by the Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ)
- Percent of first-time parents receiving home visiting services
- Percent of parents feeling connected to their child and engaged in their development

Age 3-5

- Percent of children attending high-quality pre-k programs
- Percent at benchmark for social and emotional development
- Percent of children assessed as ready in all developmental domains when entering kindergarten
- Percent of caregivers who actively participate in professional development to improve their practice

STRUCTURE & LEADERSHIP

Boston Birth to 8 is inclusive of and open to all members of the Boston early childhood community including pediatricians, health centers, Boston Public Health Commission, researchers, the City of Boston, early care and education providers, community-based organizations and others with a stake in early childhood efforts in Boston. Led by United Way and the Boston Opportunity Agenda, it is comprised of a Leadership Team of 12 members representing each of the aforementioned groups.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parent involvement is a major priority of Boston's efforts. Fostered by efforts begun by Thrive in 5, parent leaders have enabled community organizations in Boston to reach parents from diverse cultures who were previously disconnected from community services and resources. The parent leadership model has been so successful in connecting parents to each other and to the community organizations funded to support them, that a state sponsored Boston-based coalition – The Boston Family Engagement Network – has now instituted Parent Partners in each of its 10 grantee sites. Parents attend Boston Birth to 8 quarterly meetings and provided their input in shaping the indicators Boston Birth to 8 will use moving forward.