



STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2024

**THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT DALLAS**

INTRODUCTION

The Center for Children and Families (CCF) at The University of Texas at Dallas was established in 2008 with the goal of promoting optimal family and child development through research, practice, and outreach. Center-affiliated faculty researchers examine a wide range of cutting-edge issues related to biological, psychological, social, and cultural foundations of development. Throughout its first 10 years, the Center developed and implemented clinical programming, educational outreach, and student training, working to translate our cross-cutting research to serve the wider community and enhance families' lives.

Accomplishments of the first 10 years include:

- Substantial research funding support from federal and foundation entities and numerous impactful publications among our affiliated faculty.
- A Spring Lecture Series, open to the public, held annually since 2009.
- An Annual Forum, open to the public, featuring a renowned keynote speaker, highlighting timely issues addressing children's healthy development.
- Developmental screenings and referral services provided for over 1,300 children, ages 0-5, free-of-charge, through the Grow With Me/Crece Conmigo program.
- The development and expansion of an innovative playful learning program, Play With Me/Juega Conmigo, for children at risk and their parents, delivered in five high-need communities. The program serves 248 parents and 302 children per year.
- A study of the impact of Play With Me, which demonstrated improved parenting practices, parenting efficacy, and child independence, and reduced parenting stress.
- Training of more than 220 students who have contributed to CCF's outreach services and program-evaluation research.
- The development of partnerships with agencies and organizations serving children and families throughout the North Texas region.



MISSION

To advance the healthy development of children in our community and nation.

VISION

To be a nationally recognized research center where leading scholars and students generate knowledge and apply developmental science to service for children, families, and professionals to advance children's optimal development.

VALUES

We believe in the power and worth of developmental science and relationship-centered practices to advance children's development and mitigate the challenges families face.

STRATEGY

We achieve our goals by (1) conducting innovative research in human development with real-world impact, (2) educating future professionals, and (3) delivering science-driven service to children and their families.



STRATEGIC GOALS 2019-2024

1. Become a nationally recognized research center for child development known for its high quality scholarship, training and science-based service delivery.

The Center's faculty are highly productive scholars whose research crosses the fields of human development ranging from parent-child relationships to social-emotional health, language development, and critical thinking in children. Faculty affiliates of the Center publish regularly in prestigious professional journals, and they currently hold over \$10.4 million in research grants from prestigious funders including the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health. A strong foundation for national recognition exists. Growth in recognition as a center that encompasses research, training, and outreach will be enhanced by developing more deliberate linkages between all three arms. Cross-cutting research themes will be developed that utilize and build upon the Center's innovative service programs to stimulate inventive, influential research in the under-researched population served by these programs. These new cross-cutting research themes will address research funding priorities of national foundations to build an integrative science that reflects the diversity of our community. The faculty will work to enhance the research portfolio of the Center for Children and Families and the School of Behavioral and Brain Sciences, strengthening the reputation of CCF as a research center.

2. Expand and diversify the funding portfolio for the Center for Children and Families.

To support the goal of national recognition for the Center, it is necessary to expand and diversify the Center's funding portfolio. The service offerings of the Center have reached a level of maturity warranting an expansion of funding from major funders, both local and national. More explicit coupling of the Center's service programs with basic and applied research provide an untapped means to grow funding for both research and the Center's service program delivery. In addition, there is need to raise additional outside funding for the research, service, and outreach operations of the Center as financial support from the School of Behavioral and Brain Sciences is projected to decrease over the coming years.

3. Become sought after by top students who seek education in child and family development at the undergraduate, masters, and doctoral levels.

The quality of its faculty should make the Center a top choice for excellent students across the country and around the world. The Center provides a top-notch education for the students coupled with opportunities for them to engage in applied service learning experiences that enriches their understanding of child development. Securing funding for undergraduate research training through such means as the National Science Foundation's Research Experience for Undergraduates (NSF/REU) fellowship program linking Center services and research can provide greater visibility to the excellent opportunities provided for students.

4. Expand the system of outcome measurements for the Center's intervention programs and disseminate findings of impact.

Outcome measurements of impact are an essential aspect of any direct service provision. Such measures are increasingly important to garner support. Such a system of measurement and dissemination of results will also enhance the reputation of the Center.

5. Provide excellent services for children and families.

It is important that the Center maintain an optimal balance between the scope of its service delivery and its research and training mission. The Center's Play With Me/Juega Conmigo program and Grow With Me/Crece Conmigo early developmental screenings program are established interventions that have improved the lives of many children and families in the North Texas region. Delivery of these services together with the training of students are key components of the Center's operations and growing reputation in the University and the wider community. Closer integration of the service delivery programs with research studies of the Center's faculty, offering and stimulating expanded research opportunities with diverse populations, will also serve to support the delivery of the Center's services for children and families. For example, securing a prestigious training program grant could help strengthen the bridge between research and service to enhance the lives of children in our community.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

2019-2024

To achieve our goals, we commit to the following priorities:

1. Diversify the Funding Portfolio for the Center - Expand Both Novel and Traditional Means for Revenue Generation.

Traditional means of funding through grants and donations are significant means for funding the Center's research and operations. The financial base for the Center needs to be expanded to include new approaches, including larger, national foundations and various means for producing revenue from service provision and training.

2. Expand Developmental Science Conducted by Center Faculty.

To become a nationally recognized research center, CCF needs to enlarge and strengthen the developmental science conducted by its faculty and make visible links between its service programs and research conducted by CCF faculty. Cross-cutting research themes need to be developed and shared to enhance the profile of CCF as a research center.



3. Expand Student Integration into CCF's Research and Service Portfolio.

Educating students for future academic work or applied services for children and families is an essential mission of the Center. The Center should become a key resource and academic home for students seeking careers in the field of child development. Financial support for students needs to be made available.



4. Continuously Assess and Review CCF's Service Portfolio with Respect to Maintenance, Growth, and Recognition.

The Play With Me/Juega Conmigo program has considerable potential to positively influence the lives of a greater number of children and families, and to serve as a revenue source for CCF. Refinement of the outcome measurement system (Initiative #5) with testing of features and/or trial variations in program features should further enhance the recognized value of the program to the community and potentially to larger numbers of children and families.

The Grow With Me/Crece Conmigo program has identified a strong need for the screening and referral services it provides to underserved children and families. The program needs to secure additional sources of funding and support. Greater coordination with UT Dallas' Human Development and Early Childhood Disorders graduate program as well as other academic programs can help expand the program's reach and provide additional beneficial training experiences for students.



5. Implement a Comprehensive Outcomes Measurement System to Assess the Efficacy of CCF Service Programs.

The Center has a mature means for gathering output data but this work is underfunded. The increasing requirements for outcome measures by both practitioners and donors demand that the Center take a more continuous approach to assessing the efficacy of its programs. Such evaluations are necessary part of the Center's mission.

6. Tell the Center's Story

If the Center is to achieve the recognition it deserves, more direct and intensive communication and marketing efforts are required. The quality of the Center's faculty is a key means for expanding the Center's impact and influence. Effort should be made to raise recognition of these faculty in both the academic and applied worlds. Center services are making a significant difference in the lives of families, children, and students. These stories need to be told.

