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Every Child Matters

From birth through early 20s, the situations of young people in our communities define the future for us all. In this issue, we'll look at the successes and goals of ACS clients who are addressing the needs of children from pre-natal to early adulthood. Plus, we reveal how building a business around causes that matter has earned another accolade for ACS.

Happy reading from all of us at ACS!

ACS Brings Out the Promise of Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Grantees

For almost two years, ACS has been working closely with grantees of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Forward Promise Initiative, helping coalitions that focus on improving the trajectory and opportunities for boys and young men of color to become more strategic and effective in their outreach, advocacy and communication. Each grantee has its own focus and needs, so the ACS team has helped them craft specific, targeted plans and actions to move their work forward.

For example, in Chicago, ACS works with the Safe School Consortium (SSC), which focuses on policies and practices that support restorative justice to change perspectives, improve school culture, improve lives and reduce racial inequities in the schools. Restorative justice is an important solution that helps schools become safe, supportive and equitable environments that value the potential of all youth to succeed. During the past 18 months, ACS has helped SSC achieve the following:

- develop a host of collateral materials that include an introduction to SSC,
- an overview of restorative justice,
- a school curriculum for implementing restorative justice, and
- a policy document with recommendations and examples of best practice.

ACS also guided SSC in the creation of message strategies and content for its work, and is now helping SSC move through the steps necessary to host a successful press event to talk about the restorative justice curriculum and the policy document, and to continue the public conversation throughout the year.

In Little Rock, Arkansas, a network of organizations collaborated to create the [Boys and Men Opportunity Success Team \(BMOST\)](#) to create pathways for attainable and sustainable success for boys and men of color in Central Arkansas. Together, the collaborators work to prevent dropout, train young men for careers and connect them with caring adults. But this collaboration was challenged when it came to introducing itself and explaining its work to others—particularly when the opportunity arose to participate in the creation of a new city wide master plan for children, youth and

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ACS Recent Appearances

Michigan

ACS Vice President Scarlett Boudier and Senior Director Rebecca Cohen led a spokesperson training for the [Early Childhood Investment Corporation's Great Start to Quality initiative](#) at their Quality Improvement meeting in Lansing, Michigan on September 23rd. Scarlett kicked off the meeting with an inspirational keynote to more than 120 child development outreach staff that explored trends in early childhood QRIS as well as infant and toddler messaging. She connected these trends with the critical nature of their role in being spokespeople on behalf of the early childhood field and the children and families in Michigan touched by their work.

Scarlett and Rebecca then provided an additional two-hour professional development session for more than 60 quality improvement specialists who operate on the front-lines with early childhood providers, complete with tools and tips for becoming a better spokesperson.

North Carolina

Scarlett Boudier, VP, and Heather Lenz, Policy Associate, traveled to Asheville, North Carolina on October 6th to share the story of how [PRE4CLE](#) (a roadmap to expand preschool to all of Cleveland's three and four-year-old children) moved from an idea to a successful plan for Cleveland's children during its second year. The duo highlighted the challenges, lessons learned, and outcomes of PRE4CLE through an overview of the process used to build an improved preschool system in Cleveland. After the presentation, Scarlett and Heather facilitated a discussion about what a preschool planning and implementation process might look like in Asheville and Buncombe County, NC.

Minnesota

ACS President Lori McClung and Senior Director Rebecca Cohen led a half-day spokesperson training session for the 21st Century Academy in Minneapolis. The Academy is an after school program for middle school students and is part of the city's [North Side Achievement Zone \(NAZ\)](#). NAZ is also one of the grantees ACS has worked with as part of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Forward Promise initiative to support better outcomes for boys and young men of color. As part of that training, Lori and Rebecca shared results from a national audit of messages used by similar after school programs across the country. This research helped to provide context and guidance for spokespersons as they engage groups and individuals around this critical work.

Prevent Child Abuse Arizona Elevates Awareness Statewide

As the issue of child abuse and neglect comes to the forefront in Arizona's child safety system, ACS is helping [Prevent Child Abuse Arizona \(PCA Arizona\)](#) to shift the public conversation about child maltreatment so prevention is prioritized as the lead strategy in the child safety system. PCA Arizona reaches more than 45,000 young children and their families with parent education, home visits, and child welfare system improvements across the state, which is proven to be the most effective and cost-efficient prevention strategy. In particular, ACS is helping PCA Arizona:

- Craft resonant core and audience-specific messaging to clearly and consistently communicate the value and importance of child abuse prevention.
- Develop a two-year advocacy strategy that will help elevate the topic of prevention in the statewide child safety policy discussion—especially in the Arizona legislature.
- Create template media resources for PCA Arizona to use to become a key player and trusted source of information to the media on issues of child abuse and neglect, and the impact of child abuse prevention.

The work with PCA Arizona began in January 2015, and the advocacy strategy, messaging, and media support will be complete in December 2015.

“Our work with PCA Arizona dovetails perfectly with our early childhood communication and advocacy work with groups like First Things First in Arizona and others around the country,” explains Heather Lenz, ACS Policy Associate, who leads the ACS team for this project. “We want to help PCA Arizona leverage the [media](#) to shift the public conversation about child safety so that prevention becomes a priority for the community and the legislature, ultimately protecting the physical and emotional well-being of Arizona's children and families.” ▲

What's New:

Scarlett Boudier Tapped for Smart Start Conference Steering Committee

Scarlett Boudier has been selected to serve on the Steering Committee for the 2016 National [Smart Start](#) Conference, May 2–5, 2016 in Greensboro, NC. This conference is one of the largest early childhood professional development events in the country. Last year's conference hosted more than 1,000 early childhood leaders from 26 states. Scarlett was selected because of her national expertise in early childhood messaging, communication and advocacy. As part of the Steering Committee, she'll provide input for conference sessions and speakers.

ACS Earns Prestigious Weatherhead 100 Award

ACS was named by The Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western Reserve University as a Weatherhead 100 winner for 2015. This award was established in 1988 to recognize the region's fastest-growing and most innovative companies based on revenue from the past five years. The award will be presented at the annual Weatherhead 100 black tie gala on December 3, 2015. Find out more at www.weatherhead.case.edu/weatherhead100

Client Spotlight: Franklin County Infant Mortality Taskforce

When most people talk about infant mortality, they think of the clinical interventions or various community-based prevention programs. Rarely does the question of health care coverage and enrollment come into play. But in Franklin County, Ohio, ACS helped to support a task force that tackled precisely that issue.

The Greater Columbus Infant Mortality Task Force (GCIMTF) came together in 2014 to create a plan to reduce the Columbus/Franklin County infant mortality rate by nearly 40% (from the 9.8/1,000 recorded in 2011 to 6/1,000) and to cut the racial disparity gap in infant mortality in half by 2020. The plan produced by GCIMTF included eight strategies—one of which is to improve women's health before pregnancy. To pursue this strategy, Franklin County Department of Job and Family Services (FCDJFS), engaged ACS as its partner.

From November 2014–August 2015, ACS convened and facilitated several conversations among leaders from FCDJFS, the Columbus Public Health Department, Primary One Health, Heart of Ohio Family Health Centers, Lower Lights Christian Health Centers, Mt. Carmel Health System, Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center, Nationwide Children's Hospital, OhioHealth, and Southeast, Inc. to collectively develop a strategy for health systems and Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) to increase the enrollment of women of childbearing age into Medicaid.

ACS researched and led the team through an exploration of [national best practices](#) for increasing enrollment, facilitated the creation of a strategy that allowed for the upmost flexibility in terms of implementation, and also addressed the significant barriers to enrollment faced by low-income populations. As a result, the task force created a strategy that uses a comprehensive continuum to identify, educate, enroll and track women of childbearing age in certain neighborhoods and community wide. While the resulting plan does not micro-manage the health systems and FQHCs that enroll women into Medicaid, it does provide a series of shared recommendations for activities that will help all participants better track their progress and outcomes.

The overall goal—to enroll 100% of eligible women – is ambitious, but absolutely necessary and attainable. Armed with a new plan of action, FCDJFS and its partners are ready and eager to succeed, with 100% enrollment a standard practice by 2016. ▲

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families. With help from ACS, BMOST developed a strategy to put itself front and center among community partners, and created a set of clear and concise messages to explain the nature and importance of its collaborative work. ACS guided BMOST through the planning and strategy process and provided insights from national best practice research.

“Part of ACS’s success with Forward Promise grantees like BMOST is its sophisticated understanding of how nonprofit collaborations work,” says Mark Perry, Executive Director of New Futures for Youth, which serves as the BMOST backbone organization. “From the get-go, it was clear that ACS understood what our work was about—that we weren’t direct service providers but coalition builders and program modelers for community partners. They have a deep knowledge of the work in community, and understand the challenges of trying to work as an intermediary. They helped us think through broad strategies around implementation and nail down specifics of coordination and communication. They also helped us identify some partners with whom we can build supportive networks in other communities.”

“In terms of our communication strategy, ACS helped define who BMOST is, why it matters, what we do, and why folks should care,” says Kent Broughton a BMOST Fellow housed at the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation. “They walked us through the creation of those key messages and how to share them effectively, especially when it was time for our public launch.”

BMOST, SSC and other Forward Promise grantee organizations are beginning to demonstrate their increased capacity for strategy and communication by growing their networks of partners and supporters, honing and using their new messages, and in turn strengthening their work with young boys and men of color. As their work moves forward (with continued support from ACS), more youth of color will no doubt realize the promise that their lives hold. ▲

Want to learn how communication, strategy development or advocacy can move your organization forward?

Need an expert for training sessions or conference presentations?

Contact one of our team members, call toll-free at 1-877-372-0166 or visit our website at

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