

Childhood Homelessness:


MASSACHUSETTS IN FOCUS



**HORIZONS
FOR HOMELESS
CHILDREN®**

For 35 years we have worked to improve the lives of young children and their families experiencing homelessness in Massachusetts. We support homeless families exclusively by providing high-quality early education, opportunities for play, and comprehensive family support services. Nobody knows early childhood homelessness - both the challenges and solutions - better than us.

35 YEAR HISTORY OF INNOVATION

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- 1988 Became the first provider in Boston to serve homeless families exclusively.
 - 1990 Opened our first Playspace in Boston.
 - 1994 Began partnership with Harvard's Center for the Developing Child and opened first Early Childhood Center in Dorchester.
 - 2000 Opened Early Education Center in Jamaica Plain.
 - 2006 Opened Early Education Center in Roxbury.
 - 2007 Incorporated mental health services into programming for children.
 - 2008 Integrated CSEFL-based trauma-informed practices into our programs.
 - 2010 Introduced music curriculum.
 - 2016 Adopted Mobility Mentoring[®] coaching model to enhance our practice with parents.
 - 2018 Instituted a partnership with Lesley University to give Horizons staff access to studies in the field of Child Homelessness.
 - 2018 Began pursuing certification as a Brazelton Touchpoints Center.
 - 2019 Boston Public Schools' Universal Pre-K program invested in Horizons through Boston's Expansion Grant, opening several UPK classrooms at the center.
 - 2021 The Edgerley Family Horizons Center brings together all of our programs, under one roof, in the heart of Roxbury with convenient access to healthcare and social services for families
 - 2022 Horizons led by example and addressed educator salary disparity internally while advocating for broader legislative action to do the same.

WHAT MAKES HORIZONS DIFFERENT?

- We mitigate the impact of homelessness on children's social & emotional, cognitive and gross motor development. Supplemental programming like mental health services and music therapy support this goal.
- We deliver education and care that is sensitive to the trauma that children facing homelessness have experienced. That's reflected in our teacher to student ratios, vigilance around 'trauma triggers' and focus on consistency and routine in the classroom.
- We have a fundamental belief that every parent has strengths. We work to identify those strengths then mentor and empower parents to help themselves out of homelessness.

- We are ranked among the top 5% for quality according to the Massachusetts Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) for Early Education.
- Our work extends beyond the children and families we serve directly in our advocacy work. Our advocacy work prioritizes legislation, appropriations, and regulatory changes in key policy areas including housing, early education and care, and anti-poverty and income security.
- Highly-skilled early educators are key to success for children in poverty and Horizons has taken bold steps to ensure our pay and benefits structure appropriately values our team's work and supports the growth of a truly inclusive and equitable workforce.

OUR COMMITMENT TO DEI

At Horizons, we are conscious that systemic racism, bias, classism, and poverty contribute to the national crisis of family homelessness. We know that to deliver the best possible services to our families and create the optimal environment for all members of the organization, we must actively work to ensure we set the standard for a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable culture.

OUTCOMES

Horizons employs a two-generation model that is well respected in Massachusetts and nationwide. Since opening our doors, Horizons has served 5,000 children in our early education centers and has provided access to play to over 20,000 children through our Playspace Program.

Children who attend our early education centers move on to excel in public and private school settings. By providing supports to their parents, their long term prospects for academic and professional success are even greater.

Horizons uses evidence-based practices for proven impact. By partnering with Head Start, Brazelton Institute at Boston Children's Hospital, NAEYC and other recognized programs, we've adopted and contributed to the best practices that exist to support children and families facing homelessness.