Program Evaluation Brief: **The Exchange Club Family Center (ECFC) Program**

Prepared exclusively for Family Service of Chester County by Kitrosser Associates

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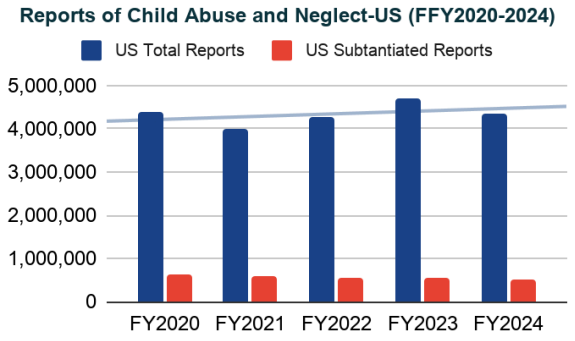
Ending the Cycle of Chronic Child Abuse and Neglect

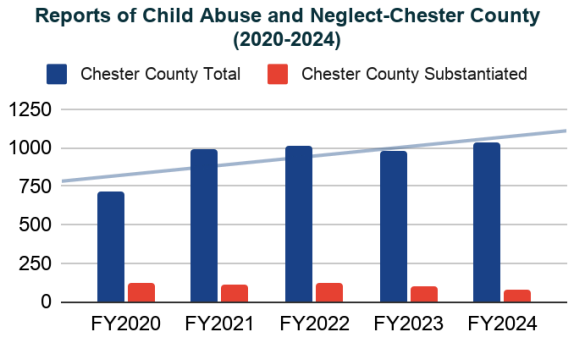
THE ISSUE

Child maltreatment remains a persistent challenge.

Child maltreatment is undoubtedly one of modern society's most pernicious problems. In the United States, recognition of child abuse and neglect as a social issue can be traced all the way back to the colonial era, when some of the very first cases were prosecuted. Since then, the nation's response to this problem has evolved quite substantially; however, a staggering number of reports are made each year (as shown in the two charts[1–10] on the right). In Federal Fiscal Year 2024, the most recent year for which data are available, an estimated 4.37 million referrals alleging child abuse and neglect were received by child protective services agencies in the United States, of which 532,228 children were identified as victims of child maltreatment[1]. Locally, in Chester County, 1,030 reports of child abuse were recorded in 2024, with 83 cases substantiated[6].

Behind these numbers are children who may experience physical abuse, emotional or psychological cruelty, sexual abuse, or neglect–including unmet needs related to supervision, food, housing, healthcare, or other necessities. The consequences of child abuse and neglect can extend far beyond immediate harm and can affect a child's physical and emotional well-being, sense of safety, and healthy development; however, intervention–in the form of a mixed combination of supports and education tailored to the specific needs of families–can protect children while helping families become stronger and more resilient. It is within this framework that the Exchange Club Family Center (ECFC) program seeks to reduce the risk of child abuse and neglect.





THE ECFC APPROACH

Protect children. Strengthen families.

The ECFC program is an evidence-informed intervention focused on the prevention of child maltreatment in Chester County. Its approach combines home visitation with case management and focuses on two complementary objectives: 1) to prevent further incidents of child abuse and neglect by strengthening parents' knowledge and understanding of age-appropriate expectations and building effective parenting skills; and 2) to help families work toward self-sufficiency by reducing or removing sources of severe stressors (e.g., homelessness and housing instability, food insecurity, mental health, lack of support, etc.) that can overload a parent's intellectual and emotional capacity to care for their children. **At the heart of the intervention are experienced, knowledgeable, and dedicated social workers** who work alongside families at vulnerable moments to help them build on their strengths and achieve lasting change.

The Real-World Impact of the ECFC Program

A Snapshot of Program Outcomes in FY2026

In FY2026, a total of **96 families were referred** to the ECFC program, about the same number that was recorded in the previous year.

95.6%

OF CHILDREN REMAINED SAFELY AT HOME

without removal to out-of-home care

5/5

AVERAGE SCORES IMPROVED ACROSS ALL FIVE DOMAINS

on the Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI)

CHILD SAFETY

Keeping children safely at home.

Among the families that received support[11] during the reporting period, **95.6% of children remained safely in their homes without being removed to out-of-home care.**

PARENTING PROGRESS

Parents demonstrated movement toward safety and more responsive parenting attitudes.

Parents also demonstrated progress in the attitudes and knowledge associated with effective parenting. Aggregate results on the *Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory* (AAPI) moved in the lower-risk direction across all five areas measured, including expectations of children, empathy, attitudes toward corporal punishment, family roles, and children's power and independence. **These findings are consistent with positive shifts in parents' attitudes toward safer and more responsive parenting.** (Additional detail on the AAPI results is presented on page 4).

MOVING TOWARD SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Progress extends beyond child safety.

Client experiences documented by case managers point to progress toward greater financial stability and self-sufficiency among some families participating in the program. Over the past year, case managers have observed examples of clients securing employment, increasing household income, reducing reliance on public assistance (e.g., SNAP, TANF cash assistance, and housing assistance, etc.) and becoming better able to meet household expenses independently, despite a slowing economy. While these examples represent individual client experiences rather than a systematic measure of financial outcomes, they provide encouraging indications of progress toward greater economic stability. For families facing multiple and often interconnected challenges, these steps can be an important foundation for longer-term stability and well-being.

Two Families, Two Kinds of Progress

SAMANTHA'S GROWTH AS A PARENT

When Samantha, a single parent of four children, was referred to the program following a report of inappropriate physical discipline, she worked with an ECFC case manager over the course of several months to develop new approaches to parenting and discipline.

Together, they explored more effective ways to communicate with her children, practiced how to listen, reviewed information about child development, and talked about effective ways to respond to challenging behaviors without relying on physical discipline. Samantha also completed a parenting course online.

Over time, Samantha and her children reported improvements in their relationship and communication.

Sustained, individualized support can help parents develop new ways of understanding and responding to their children's behavior.



MARGARET'S JOURNEY TOWARD GREATER SELF-SUFFICIENCY

When Margaret entered the program, she was living doubled-up with family because she did not have stable housing of her own. Her oldest child was living with another family member because there was not enough space for him in the home. At the same time, Margaret was working to address substance use issues that had contributed to her family's instability.

With support from her ECFC case manager, Margaret worked through the requirements of her substance abuse treatment program while also taking steps toward achieving greater housing and financial stability. Her case manager helped her apply for a housing voucher and search for an apartment large enough to accommodate her family. Jointly, they also developed a resume for Margaret, explored job-training opportunities, and prepared her for employment interviews. As Margaret made progress in each of these areas, she was able to address barriers that had previously made it difficult to create a stable home for her family. The coordinated support helped her turn individual steps–completing treatment, securing housing, and pursuing employment–into a broader path toward family stability.

Margaret ultimately secured housing that could accommodate her family and obtained employment that provided enough income to cover her non-discretionary household expenses.

Addressing multiple challenges together can help families move toward greater stability and create the conditions for children and parents to thrive.

THE CONNECTION

The program's value extends beyond addressing immediate needs.

The data indicate progress in three interconnected dimensions of family well-being: keeping children safely at home; helping parents develop knowledge, attitudes, and skills associated with more effective parenting; and increasing self-sufficiency. **When parents have the skills and support they need, families are better positioned to achieve stability, address challenges, and provide safe and nurturing environments for their children.**

A Closer Look at Progress in Parenting Attitudes

Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI)

The AAPI is a standardized questionnaire designed to assess parents' attitudes and beliefs about parenting and raising children. Higher scores indicate parenting attitudes more consistent with nurturing, non-abusive parenting while lower scores indicate attitudes associated with greater risk of abusive or neglectful parenting practices.

AVERAGE CHANGE IN SCORES

AAPI DOMAIN	AVERAGE CHANGE
Expectations	**+0.21**
Empathy	**+0.71**
Corporal Punishment	**+0.33**
Family Roles	**+0.46**
Power & Independence	**+0.25**

ABOUT THE INSTRUMENT

The AAPI includes Form A and Form B, generally used as a pre-test and post-test, respectively. The instrument is administered to parents at intake and then again anywhere between six months and one year later. A change in score from Form A to Form B indicates a change in the direction of a parent's reported parenting attitudes. It's worth noting that the survey has published evidence supporting its reliability and validity.

HOW TO INTERPRET THESE RESULTS

Likert scale responses (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, or uncertain) to the 40 statements on the instrument are converted to scores, which range from 1 to 10. Higher scores indicate parenting attitudes that are more consistent with nurturing, non-abusive parenting, while lower scores indicate attitudes associated with greater risk for abusive or neglectful parenting practices. A change in score from Form A to Form B therefore indicates a change in the direction of the parent's reported parenting attitudes. For example, if a parent's score increases from a 4 on Form A to a 7 on Form B, the change suggests movement toward more positive and nurturing parenting attitudes in that particular area. Conversely, a decrease in score indicates movement toward attitudes associated with greater parenting risk. The size of the change provides an indication of how much the parent's score shifted, although it should be interpreted as a change in parenting attitudes, rather than as direct evidence that parenting behavior or child outcomes changed.

What Progress Looks Like

Every family is different, so case managers set individual goals with each parent.

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES	BUILDING STABILITY	MOVING TOWARD SELF-SUFFICIENCY	ADDRESSING BARRIERS
● Better parent-child communication	● Securing housing	● Finding employment (or better employment)	● Substance use treatment
● Positive discipline	● Food and basic needs	● Job training and career pathways	● Mental health services
● Understanding child development	● Reliable transportation	● More income, less reliance on public assistance	● Community resources

Showing up for families

500+	2,324	96
Home visits	Billable hours with clients	Families served

What the Findings Tell Us

The results[12] highlighted in this report demonstrate the meaningful progress that families can make when they receive timely, sustained support tailored to their needs. By helping parents strengthen their parenting skills, address barriers such as housing instability and substance use, and connect with resources that support family stability, the ECFC program helps create the conditions in which children can remain safe and families can thrive. Continued investment in prevention and early intervention will be essential for building on these gains, reducing the recurrence of child maltreatment, and strengthening the well-being of children and families throughout the community.

Endnotes

[1] Children's Bureau, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2024). *National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) Agency File FFY 2024* [Data set]. National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect.

[2] Children's Bureau, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2023). *National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) Agency File FFY 2023* [Data set]. National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect.

[3] Children's Bureau, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2022). *National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) Agency File FFY 2022* [Data set]. National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect.

[4] Children's Bureau, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2021). *National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) Agency File FFY 2021* [Data set]. National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect.

[5] Children's Bureau, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2020). *National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) Agency File FFY 2020* [Data set]. National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect.

[6] Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families. (2025). *2024 annual child protective services report: Chester County.* Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

[7] Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families. (2024). *2023 annual child protective services report: Chester County.* Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

[8] Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families. (2023). *2022 annual child protective services report: Chester County.* Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

[9] Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families. (2022). *2021 annual child protective services report: Chester County.* Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

[10] Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Children, Youth and Families. (2021). *2020 annual child protective services report: Chester County.* Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

[11] A small number of families declined support from the program prior to getting started with the intervention.

[12] Data presented in this report were drawn from multiple sources, including program records, administrative data, and interviews with program staff. Together, these sources provide quantitative and qualitative perspectives on program activities, outcomes, and impact.

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