



Summary of the 2022 BELL Summit

December 2022

Prepared by the
Policy Department of
HopePHL

INTRODUCTION

HopePHL's Building Early Links for Learning Project (BELL) held its fourth annual summit with the theme *An Equity Agenda for Young Children Experiencing Homelessness*, on November 29, 2022.

The Summit featured national and local perspectives, offering various 'next steps' for regional leadership to consider implementing with methods to improve the lives of young children experiencing homelessness.



BACKGROUND

For some, COVID may be in the rearview mirror. But many families are still experiencing the economic impact of this pandemic. Too many families are living doubled-up, couch surfing, or in emergency housing. They face the challenges of the lack of adequate, affordable housing, and of providing the emotional and social support necessary for the healthy development of their children.

COVID revealed the vulnerability of our childcare system, especially in communities of color where a disproportionate number of parents were more likely to work in front-line occupations, which offered less flexibility and remote work than other settings and forced parents to choose between work and caring for their children.

Many childcare programs that closed during the pandemic remain closed. The childcare system has a huge challenge in the inability to attract, retain, and adequately compensate qualified staff.

A lack of high quality, affordable childcare, especially for infants and toddlers, affects a parent's ability to accept work, which in turn affects their ability to afford adequate housing. The lack of affordable childcare and housing further exacerbates racial and economic disparities.

The BELL summit focused on the racial and economic disparities facing young African American children.

In Philadelphia, 87% of families entering the homeless housing system are African American. This disproportionate representation in the homeless service system can be attributed to long-term systemic inequity.

The Summit discussed what each of us can do to remove barriers, create access and opportunity, and ensure we are providing culturally appropriate services which strengthen the resilience of the families we serve.

Kathy Desmond, HopePHL's President, facilitated the Summit. She started by sharing her gratitude for the dedicated professionals who are working every day to improve the lives of children and families.



Here are the main points offered by our speakers. Their presentations and additional information can be accessed at the links provided below.

Dr. Iheoma Iruka

Dr. Iruka is a Research Professor in the Department of Public Policy and the Founding Director of the **Equity Research Action Coalition** at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at The **University of North Carolina** at Chapel Hill.



She is leading initiatives focused on ensuring that minoritized children and children from low-income households, especially Black children, thrive in the early years through the intersection of anti-bias, anti-racist, culturally grounded research, program, and policy.

She has a BA in Psychology from Temple University, an MA in Psychology from Boston University and an MS and PhD in Applied Developmental Psychology from the University of Miami, FL.

➔ View her powerpoint at https://www.hopephl.org/uploads/2/9/3/9/29391481/iiruka_pec-cares_bell_summitt_sharing.pdf.

Key messages:

- [Early years matter for children's healthy development.](#)
- Addressing homelessness must be holistic and anti-racist.
- Attending to the '3Ps'– *Protection, Promotion, and Preservation* (see below)
- Activate the [Black Child National Agenda](https://equity-coalition.fpg.unc.edu/) - <https://equity-coalition.fpg.unc.edu/>
- Engage in R.I.C.H.E.R. actions through our self-inquiry and coalition building (see below)

Protection Policies

- Maintain Child Tax Credits and Income Supports
- Address Harsh and Unfair Discipline
- Ensure Equity in Early Intervention and Special Education

Promotion Policies

- Address Racial Disparities in Wages & Career Advancements
- Expand Family and Medical Leave Act
- Expand Health Insurance
- Expand Universal Access to Early Care and Education

Preservation Policies

- Invest in Black-Owned and Black-Led Business, Organizations, and Institutions
- Ensure Culturally Responsive Curricula and Practices Through Workforce Development and Training
- Pass Reparations

Be Richer!

- Re-educate about history
- Integrate rather than just desegregate
- Critical consciousness
- Humility of privilege + Human Dignity
- Erase racism + other – isms
- Re-vision different ways & approaches + Radical mindset

Resources mentioned by Dr. Iruka

- **Black Parents and Their Babies: Attending to the First 1,000 Days** ([Black Child National Agenda: America Must Deliver on its Promise – Equity Research Coalition \(unc.edu\)](#))
- **Black Child National Agenda: America Must Deliver on its Promise** ([Black Child National Agenda: America Must Deliver on its Promise – Equity Research Coalition \(unc.edu\)](#))
- National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2019). **Vibrant and Healthy Kids: Aligning Science, Practice, and Policy to Advance Health Equity**. The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/25466>
- Sucsy, A. (August 2021). **An invisible crisis: Early childhood homelessness— a Primer**. Child Care Services Association.

- Bennett, N., D. Hays, and B. Sullivan, *The Wealth of Households: 2019*, Current Population Reports, P70BR-180, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC, 2022

➔ Reach out to Dr. Iruka and learn more at <https://equity-coalition.fpg.unc.edu>; contact her at fpgequitycoalition@unc.edu and on Twitter at @lheomalruka

Barbara Poppe

Barbara Poppe is the founder of **Barbara Poppe and Associates** and the former executive director of the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness.



Ms. Poppe is a nationally recognized expert on homelessness and results-driven public-private partnerships. Ms. Poppe served as the Executive Director of the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness from November 2009 to March 2014. During her tenure, Ms. Poppe oversaw the Federal response to homelessness by working with 19 Federal agencies to create partnerships at every level of government and with the private sector to reduce and end homelessness. In June 2010, Ms. Poppe and four Cabinet Secretaries announced *Opening Doors*, the nation's first-ever comprehensive Federal plan to prevent and end homelessness.

Ms. Poppe shared the work of the “Healthy Beginnings at Home” (HBAH) initiative, encouraging her audience that this initiative can be replicated.

The work relates to the fact that housing instability and homelessness increases the likelihood of pre-term birth, infant mortality and acute health conditions. Despite its importance, a lack of affordable housing has made families – particularly those of color – vulnerable to homelessness and other forms of housing instability, putting them at increased risk for health complications.

➔ View her powerpoint: https://www.hopephl.org/uploads/2/9/3/9/29391481/hbah_briefing_presentation_11.29.22-poppe.pdf

Summary of the Healthy Beginnings at Home initiative

It is a housing intervention offering rental assistance and housing stabilization services.

1. Rental assistance totaling 24 months

- 15-months of rental subsidy covering the gap between full market rent and 30% of the participants' income
- Followed by 6-month stepdown period in which the subsidy decreased gradually until the participant pays full rent.
- Some participants found housing in units that included a full rent subsidy on an ongoing basis rather than the time limited subsidy provided by HBAH

2. Housing stabilization services

- Housing navigation includes identifying housing, negotiate with landlords, and remain securely housed when faced with challenges.
- Services model used best practices
 - Family Critical Time Intervention Housing First approach
 - Clinical best practices: person-centered planning, motivational interviewing, and trauma-informed care
- Usual care support services
 - Community Health Worker
 - Care Manager and a job Life Coach

➔ Reach out to Ms. Poppe at Barbara@poppeassociates.com, and learn more about the HBAH 2 Replication report at <http://www.poppeassociates.com/hbah>

Sadie Sprague-Lott

Sadie Sprague-Lott is the Education Coordinator of the largest family emergency housing program in Philadelphia, **Families Forward Philadelphia**. Since 2016, Families Forward Philadelphia has been an active partner with the BELL Project. Families Forward is the largest homeless family provider in the city.



Ms. Sprague-Lott was asked to answer the question: *How do we create substantial changes for families with children 0-5 who are unhoused?* She offered these points:

- The goal of the education program for the next 6 months is to focus on strategic ways to expand services to participants and connections with outside organizations that will encourage the development and growth of programming. The focus is on how we use wrap-around services, such as education, to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty. Using education to enact agency and autonomy in the lives of participants will be a crucial

part of the education department's mission. The objective will be to ensure that every family member that touches our program has access to quality education programs while with us which allows them to continue to have better opportunities following their time with Families Forward Philadelphia.

- Those services include: Philadelphia Infant-Toddler Intervention, BELL, CHOP Karabots Early Head Start, School District of Philadelphia Pre K, Read by 4th.
- Centered into this mission is the “belief in the power of young people.” That is why this six-month plan will heavily focus on programs and initiatives for young people. In addition to this, Families Forward Philadelphia will work to expand teen programming, and early childhood education resources.

 Learn more about Families Forward Philadelphia at www.familiesforwardphilly.org

Shante Brown

Shante Brown is the Acting Secretary, **Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL)**. Ms. Brown oversees the system that provides childcare, home visiting, early intervention, and other early childhood education strategies.



Ms. Brown shared various strategies of how young children/families experiencing homelessness are being addressed in OCDEL’s current projects. These strategies include:

- Language added to support children and families experiencing homelessness, in addition to the rewrite to include more equitable opportunities, nine Administration of Children & Families (ACF) Interactive Learning Modules Supporting Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness were added to the Pennsylvania PD Registry.
- The Early Learning Resource Centers have been participating in on-going training to support families and children experiencing homelessness.
- Identifying and moving towards addressing childcare deserts to help ensure Pennsylvania families most at-risk for or experiencing homelessness have access to quality childcare as a key resource.

Ms. Brown shared these recommendations for moving forward into 2023:

- Recommendation #1 – Training and Technical Assistance: Assure working knowledge of the federal McKinney-Vento definition of homeless for children and youth, as reflected in refined protocol and ongoing practice.
- Recommendation #2 – Partnership and Collaboration: Direct and facilitate systemic infrastructures that sustain communication of providers and key leaders at both state and community levels. This work cannot be done alone or in small silos. It will take a coordinated approach.
- Recommendation #3 – Policy Transformation: Update and align policies related to equitable early learning access for young children experiencing homelessness and ensure full implementation of stated policies.
- Recommendation #4 – Data Integrity: Update and align data systems across sectors to create robust capacity and assure accurate data entry, reporting, and monitoring of trends.
- Recommendation #5 – Research and Evaluation: Continue to engage academic and research partners in measuring and reporting on progress.



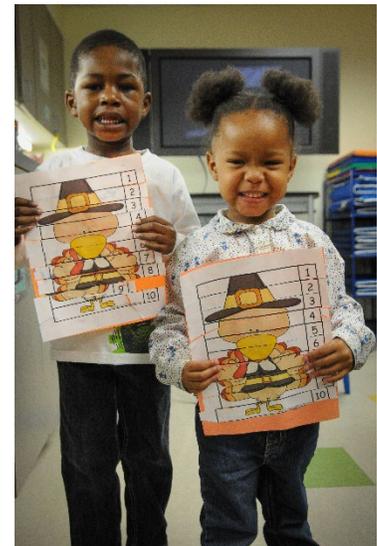
Learn more about OCDEL at <https://bit.ly/3WvMITt>

HOPEPHL's NEXT STEPS

Ms. Desmond reported that its next steps include that her team will draft an issues platform for **Philadelphia's Mayoral candidates** to increase their awareness of the needs of young children experiencing homelessness, and to lead a community discussion on serving newborns who start their first days being homeless.

Viewers are encourage to discuss how best to transform local systems to better serve with more equitable strategies to support child development, and to consider replicating the **Healthy Beginnings at Home** initiative.

Contact HopePHL or Ms. Desmond at policy@hopephl.org.



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About HopePHL

HopePHL™ (pronounced “hopeful”) was founded through an integration of two human service organizations in Philadelphia, PA: People’s Emergency Center (PEC) and Youth Service, Inc (YSI). Leveraging 150 years of combined service experience, it is HopePHL’s mission to inspire Philadelphia's children, youth, families and communities to thrive by providing housing, advocacy, and trauma-responsive social services designed to promote equity, resilience, autonomy, and well-being.

HopePHL is committed to ending systemic racism. We amplify diverse voices and champion issues of inequity, including accessible quality education, healthcare, safety, and justice. HopePHL helps over 25,000 community members and residents annually to reach their goals of safe homes, economically secure and healthy families, and thriving businesses. People with Hope, thrive.

Learn more about BELL at hopephl.org/building-early-links-for-learning.